A Quarterly of New Literature

ACCENT

DYLAN THOMAS:
Ceremony After a Fire Raid

HARRY SLOCHOWER:
Franz Werfel & Sholom Asch

RICHARD POSNER: The Grave
PAUL ROSENFELD: Florine Stettheimer
JACK JONES: An Eye Meets a Daughter of the Police
HYMAN SCHWETZOV: Poems to Two Paintings by Paul Klee
F. O. MATTHIESSEN: Katherine Anne Porter
NICHOLAS MOORE: The Cruel Lover

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ACCENT

A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE

Volume 5, Number 2 Winter, 1945

DYLAN THOMAS:

Ceremony After a Fire Raid

i

Myselves
The grievers
Grieve
Among the street burned to tireless death
A child of a few hours
With its kneading mouth
Charred on the black breast of the grave
The mother dug, and its arms full of fires.

Begin
With singing
Sing
Darkness kindled back into beginning
When the caught tongue nodded blind,
A star was broken
Into the centuries of the child
Myselves grieve new, and miracles cannot atone.

Forgive
Us forgive
Us your death that myselves the believers
May hold it in a great flood

Till the blood shall spurt,
And the dust shall sing like a bird
As the grains blow, as your death grows, through our heart.

Crying
Your dying
Cry,
Child beyond cockcrow, by the fire-dwarfed
Street we chant the flying sea
In the body bereft.
Love is the last light spoken. Oh
Seed of sons in the loin of the black husk left.

ii

I know not whether
Adam or Eve, the adorned holy bullock
Or the white ewe lamb
Or the chosen virgin
Laid in her snow
On the altar of London,
Was the first to die
In the cinder of the little skull,
O bride and bridegroom
O Adam and Eve together
Lying in the lull
Under the sad breast of the headstone
White as the skeleton
Of the garden of Eden.

I know the legend
Of Adam and Eve is never for a second
Silent in my service
Over the dead infants
Over the one
Child who was priest and servants,
Word, singers, and tongue
In the cinder of the little skull,
Who was the serpent's
Nightfall and the fruit like a sun,
Man and woman undone,
Beginning crumbled back to darkness
Bare as the nurseries
Of the garden of wilderness.

iii

Into the organpipes and steeples
Of the luminous cathedrals,
Into the weathercocks' molten mouths
Rippling in twelve-winded circles,
Into the dead clock burning the hour
Over the urn of sabbaths
Over the whirling ditch of daybreak
Over the sun's hovel and the slum of fire
And the golden pavements laid in requiems,
Into the bread in a wheatfield of flames,
Into the wine burning like brandy,
The masses of the sea
The masses of the sea under
The masses of the infant-bearing sea
Erupt, fountain, and enter to utter for ever
Glory glory glory
The sundering ultimate kingdom of genesis' thunder.

MARIUS BEWLEY:

Cities

Cities are not destroyed without a warning.
Somewhere a hand is lifted or a voice is raised
To start a fear. And sometimes Angels come
In kindness, or prophecies are read at morning
In the flight and song of birds, or scorning
Stripes some prophet strikes a tyrant dumb,
While all the nervous city holds its breath,
Half believing for a moment in his word of death.

For us there were rumors of a monstrous Birth:
Men whispered in the squares, but none had seen
The tangled foetus bristling with strange limbs.
The old men shook their heads beside the hearth
Knowing that something evil was spawned upon the earth,
And where, in white basilicas the lustrous seraphim
Had burned, now Fear composed of disjunct organs
Was worshipped in occult liturgies and jargons.

Christmas was left uncelebrated in that year;
A few remembered, but churches were not filled.
The uneasy bishop intoning Midnight Mass
Looked down the faces in the nave as though the Fear
Hideous and tortured might be lurking there.
And so for all his prayers it came to pass
That they remembering in the winter wild
The Heaven Born prayed to the Monstrous Child.

How a foetus sprang from a city's cornerstone
To drag at night across Palladian deserted squares
May be but legend that followed after fire and blood,
But we who haunt those ruined markets to atone
For years that happened when we were blood and bone
Remember less their steel and biting soldierhood
Than Fear that hid behind the doors and undercover
Of arcades where at night the perverts came to hover.

Women on the roof tops, dreading the scarlet streets,
Flapped the gaunt grey pinions of their tangled hair,
And shrieked sad songs in a Night of Knives
Of round towers toppling into metaphysical conceits,
The breaking up of people, statutes, and ancestral seats.
Only the stones and something else survives
Out of that crucible of fire and hate
Deeper than victory and dearer than defeat.

Old ghosts rising from cities buried undersea
Or in the lava flow think now of all they learned,
Of posthumous cruel wisdom that arrived too late:
But to learn such fear beyond impenitence and know
The spectre of perishing identity is such a woe
They only speak of levies or the melting down of plate.
Do not weep for us, we were already dead
Before the swords and cities put us into bed.

Here among the ruins where shepherds doze in shade,
The white bones that hid beneath my darkness,
Warming in the sun, recall the fear of blotted streets
And sirens that warned the city of a raid,
To leave us fearing, and of fear itself afraid.
Now is the season when the ewe lamb suckles at the teat,
And here among the toppled columns, untroubled by my bones,
Damon is rolling Phyllis among the stocks and stones.

HARRY SLOCHOWER:

Franz Werfel and Sholom Asch: The Yearning for Status

"There are abandoned corners of our Exile,
Remote, forgotten cities of Dispersion,
Where still in secret burns our ancient light,
Where God has saved a remnant from disaster."
Bialik

"The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you . . . for ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt."
The Talmud

The character of alienation in Jewish existence has long been recognized. Thorstein Veblen has termed the Jew "a disturber of the intellectual peace . . . a wanderer in the intellectual no man's land, seeking another place to rest, farther along the road, somewhere over the horizon . . . never complaisant nor contented." But is not this restlessness and discontent, the reluctance to tarry with the moment, an aspect of the critical and spiritual principle itself? And is not the destiny of the protester to be exposed to ostracism, within and without? In this sense, Jacques Maritain, writing of Jewish persecution, declares: "Spiritually, we are all Semites." From this view, the devil's theory of the Jew which has assumed such tragic proportions in our day may be regarded as an attack on the discriminating mind itself which refuses to accept verbal and surface assurances established by authoritarian decree. Yet, so much more intensive and cruel has been the wrong inflicted on the Jew in our time (he is doubly exposed, as a critic and as a Jew) that many writers have been impelled to concretize the estrangement of modern man through the symbol of Jewish characters. Of these, Proust's Swann, Joyce's Bloom, and Mann's Naphta, Jacob and Joseph are outstanding artistic projections.

The unsettledness and exile suffered by the Jew has, in turn, produced its dialectical pole—a deep yearning for communal status and integration. Spinoza illustrates this tendency to compensate for personal and spiritual disbarment by the construction of a universal system in which every body and every mind is or can be at home anywhere.[1] And it is one of Thomas Mann's psychological strokes of genius to have created in Naphta the complex of Jew, Jesuit and Communist, who moves from individual and social disintegration (he loses his parents and home in a pogrom) to theoretic rehabilitation in the theory of

[1] In Josephus' psalm of World Citizenship, this temper is translated into a cosmopolitan internationalism:

Praise God and be ye dispersed among the nations,
Praise God and scatter yourselves over the seas.
Praise God and lose yourselves in infinite spaces.
A slave is he who binds himself to a single country.
The Kingdom that I promise you, its name is not Zion,
Its name is the earth.

scientific Marxism, and from there to concrete status in the physical home of the Catholic Church. However, this twentieth-century Jew cannot accept this order either, and ends in tragic apartness.

The Jewish phenomenon moves in a polar rhythm of "acceptance" and "transcendence." This feature has militated against its nationalism becoming parochial and its internationalism becoming abstract. This dialectic unity is perhaps most closely approximated by Spiritual Zionism.[2] It has more of the restless "Geist" element than political Zionism, for its goal lies in a futuristic Messianic realm.[3] Its collectivistic direction brings it close to Catholicism and Socialism. Yet, it differs from Catholicism in that, not having been codified into an organized Church, it retains a certain "Protestant" flexibility amidst its yearning for harmonious order. Hence, the element of alienation remains as an ineradicable surd in its graph. It deviates from Catholicism further by its earthly emphasis derived from the notion in the Old Testament of the immanence of God.[4]

For some Zionists, taking their inspiration from Moses Hess, this terrestrial City of God comes close to the socialist idea. They see a close parallel between the Jew and the worker. Both have long been in "bondage," have suffered alienation, and been made the victims of the scapegoat technique. In both, emancipation is contingent on the liberation of all mankind. Finally, both would acquire status by placing their homeland *in the future*. The difference lies in the methods to be pursued, and perhaps also in the specific nature of the goal. The Messianic future of spiritual Zionism is more "open" than is the socialist concept of the classless state, although for some Marxists the latter also allows for later dialectic changes.

Post-war developments provided a dual hope that the Jew's long-winding Ahasuerian road might come to an end. The Balfour Declaration gave promise of a Jewish national state. The Soviet Revolution declared itself for the emancipation of all oppressed minorities and for the elimination of anti-semitism as a psychological lightning-rod to divert attention from social difficulties. To the spiritual Zionist, neither seemed wholly satisfactory. In the one case, the Holy Land was to become industrialized, and remain under the protection of Great Britain. In the other, there was the fear that the emphasis on *social* status (the Jew as a productive worker rather than as Jew) would "solve" the Jewish problem by eliminating the unique traits of the Judaic psyche. On the one

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[2] It might roughly be said to be represented in theory by Achad Ha'am, Martin Buber and Ludwig Lewisohn, and in recent literature by Sholom Asch, Waldo Frank and Franz Werfel.

[3] It is interesting to note that even political Zionism (which along with other national movements in the nineteenth century was a middle-class expression) was led by *assimilated* Jews (Herzl, Nordau, Zangwill). Their conception of Jewish culture thus allowed for a compound variety of facets.

[4] Sholom Asch's *The Nazarene* dwells on the social redemption on earth. It contrasts aspects of Judaism with individual redemption after death in Christianity. On this basis, Lewisohn distinguishes between the Christian repudiation of man and nature and the Jewish humanization of the natural. It would seem that these demarcations hold true mainly with respect to the earlier doctrines of Christianity.

hand, there was the danger that the Jewish state would develop into another capitalist nation with the class war now carried on among Jewish industrialists and workers; on the other hand, the Soviet program presented the possibility that the identification of the Jew with the worker would dissolve the specific Jewish character into an anonymous social entity. The status contained in these national and international patterns seemed lacking especially to those who sought for a resurrection of the metaphysical and the ethical in Judaism. The complex in this dilemma appears in the work of Franz Werfel and Sholom Asch.

Franz Werfel

In *Embezzled Heaven,* Theo, the narrator, confesses to the Roman Catholic priest, Johannes:

> I recognized at a very early age that the revolt against metaphysics is the cause of all our misery . . . You know that I stand *extra muros,* but you will also have realized that I regard every faith, especially the Roman Catholic, with the greatest sympathy.

By "the revolt against metaphysics," Werfel means the positivistic, nationalist and pragmatic temper. Here, time, work and money are exalted to the exclusion of a permanent perspective itself. But,

> without perspective everything is meaningless, and when everything is without meaning our natural human rights have no meaning either, even the right not to be killed. Consequently there is today only one right, namely the so-called power of facts, or the law of the jungle.

From its beginnings Werfel's work has been concerned with man's striving towards unification in the midst of divisiveness. In his lyrical period Werfel dealt with the tragedy of individuation which he regarded as man's defection from divine origins, and the source of his guilt-sense. An abstract intellectualism and an atomic individualism have separated man from man and from God. In terms of social structures, the modern nationalistic state and its cult of private property and self-assertion were to him the insidious surface manifestations of the individualistic heresy. Here Werfel was at one with the body of Expressionistic thinking and with writers, such as Wassermann, Doeblin, Georg Kaiser and Waldo Frank, leaning towards some non-mechanistic, all-inclusive Whole as an antidote to the isolative effects of modern forms.

In the early Werfel this unity is located in the integrated reactions of the child and the child-like. Later it is translated into the Father-Mother motif (Barbara in *The Pure in Heart,* Teta in *Embezzled Heaven,* Domenico in *The Pascarella Family*). On the social plane it takes form in the notion of the patriarchal communality. The nearest modern equivalent of this sociality Werfel finds in the old Austrian Empire. And, in an astounding prologue to his *Twilight of a World,* Werfel defends "Alt-Oesterreich" as having embodied "the highest possible personal freedom within a highly responsible community."

Austria appears to Werfel to have constituted the last European bulwark against nationalism, industrial capitalism, materialism and class warfare. In the Empire people lived "their common life" and found their earthly happiness, serving the while the higher idea. The last representative of "the transcendent idea" was Franz Joseph, a father to his people, standing for order, peace, culture, for "universal humanity." This principle was doomed when "modern nationalism and its scientific theories overshadowed the imperial idea of Occidental Christianity."

Franz Werfel illustrates the phenomenon of a Jew who *wants to, but cannot,* be a Catholic, of a modern who desires, but knows it is impossible, to return "to the thirteenth century." For an ambiguity arises in that Werfel feels himself to be interconnected with the situation he would regress from. He himself has been conditioned and molded by the scientific attitude and the analytic procedure which he would repudiate. The result is that even as Werfel espouses primitiveness, metaphysics and Catholic permanence, he also questions them. This is especially evident in the dramatic nature of his art where the opposition is accorded greatest justice. His primitive characters, such as Domenico Pascarella, Barbara, Teta, often appear pathetically futile, their naive immediacy requiring the help of "civilized" sophistication. The release of the animal in *The Goat Song* (which acts as a momentum liberating the peasants) is made possible by a doctor, a student, and the ethical sensitiveness of a woman. While Juarez, the Aztec Indian, is victorious, the defeat of Emperor Maximilian is suggested as partly due to his civilized understanding of the situation as a whole which lames his will to act. What saves the Armenians in *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* is Bagradian's knowledge of modern warfare and his organizational technique. The value of civilization reaches an ironic shade in this novel in that it is Bagradian who chooses to stay on the Mountain of Moses, while the primitive Armenians take to the Allied ships to live on somewhere, as aliens, in modern surroundings.

Werfel's *Embezzled Heaven* reveals most sharply how the quest for a primal Absolute is affected by the modern spirit. Teta, a simple, pious peasant, wishes to be sure that she will go to heaven. It seems to her that she might follow the example set by the Lord who sent down a Mediator to help mankind. Perhaps, if her nephew Mojimer became a priest, he could thus act as her mediator. Thereupon, Teta arranges to finance Mojimer's education for the priesthood. Thus, Teta would *buy* her way to Heaven. Furthermore, she thinks simply in terms of her personal salvation, never consulting her nephew's inclinations. Mojimer is merely her anonymous intermediary for whom she bears no particular love. Teta is cruelly punished for her modern heresies by modernism itself. She discovers later that Mojimer has never been ordained, has instead squandered her money, and turned to petty racketeering.[5]

[5] Mojimer's "evolution" from would-be priest to his unstable profession becomes a representation of Austrian history in which feudal clericalism was succeeded by petty bourgeois business in the post-war period. Even Rome is shown as having suffered similar invasion. On her way to the Eternal City, Teta discovers that what she had thought of as a pilgrimage has now become a comfortable trip in highly fashionable cars with business, rather than piety, motivating the

While none of Werfel's people achieves the Catholic status they yearn for, the Christian characters "succeed" only in trying. This contrast is shown between Englaender and Ferdinand in *The Pure in Heart,* and between Johannes and Theo (who while not a Jew is, with Werfel, the "narrator" of *Embezzled Heaven*). Unlike Johannes, Theo has no home or family ties, and leads a kind of tourist's existence. His life, as Teta's, has been "open." (Further identification between the cook and the narrator is suggested by their names.) Teta's attempt to gain Heaven by money and by imposing her will fails. But she achieves status by "service" to man and God. Theo would also acquire status by "service," in his role of intermediary in telling Teta's story. But this civilized messenger lacks the faith of simple Teta and of the ordained priest Johannes. Towards the end, Theo admits to the priest: "You have a firm faith, and my faith is confused." Where Teta gains communion at last, the narrator remains an exile.

The desire for Homecoming is thwarted. But perhaps homelessness is no absolute tragedy, is in reality God's way of saving man's spirit from making itself at home in the wrong world? Possibly exile is the alternative to enslavement? In the prophet Jeremiah *(Hearken Unto the Voice),* Werfel presents a Biblical prototype who *sought* exile. Finding himself surrounded by an exploiting and rapacious materialism, Jeremiah hears the call of God, and isolates himself from the "herd." Jeremiah chooses alienation as his home in an age when status means servility and humiliation. His alienation becomes "the burden of the mysterious law of sanctification." By thus distancing himself from people he serves them by prophesying the downfall awaiting the expansionist mores of his time. Such conversion of loss into a gain is also proclaimed by The Angel of the End of the Days in *The Eternal Road:*

> Be grateful for sorrow, your sorrow's cause
> In divine strength rooted still upward draws.

In this sense Werfel has seen his exile "as a summons to renewal." *The Song of Bernadette* is Werfel's most recent homage to regeneration by "metaphysical faith." In this novel Werfel returns to his early lyrical mood, when the child was held forth as the high instance of integration and faith. With this difference: here he would support his belief by the scientific data of history. The novel purports to be nothing more than a poetical restatement of the recorded visions of Bernadette, and the miraculous cures which were subsequently to have taken place at Lourdes. The self-questioning note with which Werfel treated his post-lyrical characters has disappeared. The author does not simply record what Bernadette claimed to have seen. He "fills" out the events, presents them as unquestionable matters of fact, and through labored verisimilitude would *persuade* the reader that it was all actually so. Werfel clearly

---

pilgrims. Modernism has infiltrated even to the Vatican, as suggested by the account of the sharp, new-model razor which the Pope has received as a gift, the use of which exhausts him on the day when he is to receive the modern pilgrims. The point becomes relevant in that Teta is here identified with the Pope, both of whom die at about the same hour, exhausted by the labors imposed upon them by the new times.

identifies himself with the child, and it is as though he himself were experiencing the visions. The emphasis throughout is on the complete normalcy of Bernadette's behavior and condition. (She falls into a trance only *after* she has seen The Lady.) The cures are presented as having had the indubitable character of miracles, since they take place *immediately*. Werfel also regresses to the technique employed in *The Goat Song* and in *Juarez and Maximilian,* where the protagonist or prime mover of the action remains invisible throughout. The Lady is "seen" only by virtue of the novelist's re-creations.

Werfel's methods of countering a sophisticated, rationalistic age of disbelief is here of utmost disingenuousness. The limitation of modernism is seen in its failure to share the faith of Bernadette! Where, in his earlier works, Werfel consciously attempted to *argue* the case for his mystic primitiveness, he is here content with stating his *attitude*. And it is this very unqualified, simple faith by this highly conscious modern which raises questions as to its representation of his actual credo. The esthetic and technical function of The Lady's literal appearance and of the miraculous cures is similar to that of the Heaven in Hauptmann's *Assumption of Hannele,* and of the miracle in the church wrought in O'Neill's *Days Without End*.

The novel itself provides some clues that Werfel's return to "the song" of his beginnings is disturbed by the cacophony of his modern experiencing. Werfel himself records that the question of Bernadette's normalcy was raised in that her visions transpire during the critical period of her adolescence. Indeed, the category of disease hovers over the entire story, and is organically bound up with Faith. Moreover, it is The Lady's beauty, rather than her goodness, which attracts Bernadette. Nor does the vision make her a better or a more socialized person. To be sure, as in the case of the Goat and of Juarez, The Lady's appearance leads to a kind of "people's" revolt. And, once again, the same aristocratic distance is maintained between the leader and the following. This is true both of The Lady and of Bernadette, who remains alone and separated from everyone, even as she returns to "the anonymous mass from which she arose."

Seen in its total context, Werfel's work admits that the recapture of a primitive, socialized Absolute is no longer possible. The new metaphysical unity can be reached only by traveling along the road of exile. But Werfel continues to have troubling doubts whether there is an end to "the eternal road." Where, in the Joseph myth, Thomas Mann chooses a story with a happy ending, Werfel's Jeremiah myth deals with an exile who remains embittered with the world.[6] And, while Joseph, traveling through Egypt's realm of the dead, attempts to establish communication with his fellow men, Jeremiah avoids "the community of men, the coarse, turbid world that had forsaken God." Hence, where estrangement in Mann's later characters is pointed toward bringing about their own and their people's socialization and humanization, in Werfel there is a kind of spiritual aristocracy in play which approaches a

[6] Also, Mann introduces daring "additions." Werfel's myth is an almost literal regression to the Biblical story.

snobbishness toward the average and the ordinary. Werfel's spiritual characters remain essentially alone, communing either with themselves or with mystical essences. Werfel's quest for status remains unrequited. He drifts anchorless between a past social paternalism which he knows cannot be recaptured and a "scientific" socialism which he calls a "kind of aspirin."

> Man certainly does not live by bread alone, but neither does he live solely by the spirit. In rejecting the materialist heresy one is in danger of falling into a spiritual heresy. When at last will the great man arise who is able to reconcile socialism with metaphysics?

In his later work Werfel suggests an ideal of social justice which lies somewhere between the Judaic-Christian heritage and Marxism. This idea is more explicitly formulated by Waldo Frank in his notion that Judaic justice unites "the realistic logic of Marx and the immanent divinity of Spinoza. . . . If Marx carries on Moses and Ezra, Spinoza carries on Isaiah and Jesus." The problems arising out of this two-fold allegiance receive epical form in the work of Sholom Asch, particularly in *Three Cities*.

Sholom Asch

Three Cities is a kind of Jewish *War and Peace*. Like Tolstoy's novel, it is the story, not so much of individuals, as of a collectivity, of families, tribes and groups. And while Zachary, the Jew, is a paler version of the massive Russian, Pierre, both are dissatisfied with and estranged from the reigning symbols of authority. Both are inwardly at war during the peaceful period, and both find themselves at last through the wars of their societies, achieving inner stability by identifying themselves with the anonymous masses. The contrast lies in the different status of the main characters which determines their final stages. Tolstoy's Pierre is nearer to the center of his community and, at the end, is shown happily married, content in the daily round of household routine. Zachary Mirkin finds only the formal categories for security. At the close he is still in quest of social integration.

Zachary, like Pierre, belongs to one of the richest families in Russia. But where Pierre only gradually becomes aware of his inner estrangement from his society, Zachary feels himself, from the outset, to be "quite alone in the world, without a family, without a fatherland, without a home." His mother was dead, and his father had brought him up neither a Jew nor a Christian, without love or hatred for his country. Thus, Zachary was thrown back upon himself. But his self was weak and anchorless. Zachary is a variation of the modern orphan generation groping for some higher strength and authority. Asch presents an architectural picture of Czarist St. Petersburg in which Zachary cannot find the standards he seeks. Here, the glamor of social position and of money determines human communication. It is a world of hollow paternalism, of wealth expended in whimsical desires to be served "cherries in snow." Unable to live in this atmosphere, Zachary leaves heavy, rich St. Peters-

burg. He goes to Warsaw to live among the community of its poor Jews. It is a way similar to that taken by Wassermann's Christian Washschaffe.

The first book, *Petersburg,* has the feeling of solid, heavy timber. It is like a dark, thick wood in which one discerns giant trees dominating the forest. *Warsaw* has the character of a broad and deep ocean where numberless human families move and huddle together. Petersburg exhibited strength and power; Warsaw exudes warmth and generosity. It has the cohesion of water-particles.

In Warsaw, Zachary meets various shades of Jewish aspirations, from those who argue for "Enlightenment" to Zionists, orthodox Jews and socialists. However, it is not any one doctrine which captures Zachary's heart, but rather the communal body of the Jewish masses. Socially they belong to no "class." Barred from the land and the factory, they are neither peasants nor proletarians, and are forced to eke out a precarious existence by an infinite variety of mediative pursuits. What draws Zachary to these masses is the "essential communism" of their life. Precisely because these Jews belong to none of the warring classes, they have salvaged a sense of "classlessness"; because they are outcasts, they have drawn together. And, in the daily routine, and in hours of need, Zachary finds a warm readiness to help, finds an attitude of universal kinship. It is in their midst, Zachary writes his father, that he knows happiness at last, and through them hopes to find salvation. "I was sick and now I am sound. And I tell you quite frankly, father, that I have regained my health and found the meaning of my life, the idea of my existence, the subject matter for my creative force, among the most wretched of the wretched, the most forsaken of the forsaken: the Jewish masses." In their collective bosom Zachary succeeds in losing his former self-consciousness and vacillating identity.

Rachel-Leah Hurvitz is the embodiment of this humanity. Her role is that of a Mother, mother to her household, to the community and to Zachary. Rachel-Leah has no understanding of the dialectical discussions which take place in her home. She does not know any theories whereby the destitute are to be emancipated. Her apperception is immediate and sensuous; her way is pure physical help and comfort. When the community is threatened with starvation, she busies herself organizing soup-kitchens, and when she appears before the authorities, she asks for "potatoes and coal," not for her constitutional rights. It was Rachel-Leah who had urged Zachary to come to Warsaw, and it is through her and in her home that he learns the meaning of communal morality.

When the Russian Revolution breaks out, we find Zachary in Moscow fighting with the Bolsheviks. He is driven to their side, not by economic necessity, but by ethical persuasion. The Bolsheviks seem to him identical with "the down-trodden and suffering Russian masses, . . . the poor, the suffering, the enslaved," of whom the Jews were a part. He supports the Revolution for its ethical goal to liberate the communal striving in man. "Moscow" appears to him as the means of actualizing and universalizing the cooperative spirit he had seen struggling in Warsaw. Like other Russian intellectuals, Zachary envisaged the aim of the Revolution as Messianic. He believed that in the dawn

to follow, all of humanity would be redeemed, "much as pious Jews believe that when the Messiah comes it will be possible to walk unharmed across bridges of paper."[7]

But Judaism has no organized church and no conception of the church militant. And, as Zachary sees the October Revolution harden into dogma with some, and as he hears arguments for the absolute justification of force in dealing with class enemies, he begins to be gnawed by doubt. His "race" begins to stir in him, the blood compounded of love for those who were now the suffering. Doubt and fear become synonymous for him with sympathy for "the other side." Zachary engages in an internal dialogue in the course of which he tells himself that

> so long as fear prevailed in our blood, man was a genuinely human, religious being who created good for himself and knew love and humility. . . . And to restore the equilibrium of the world, to recover the supremacy of Love and Goodness, the first thing needful is to rouse again in humanity that divine spark—the feeling of cowardice and fear.

For a period Zachary had seen in the Revolution the embodiment of morality. He came to it, as he had come to Rachel-Leah and to the masses in Warsaw, as a son to his Mother. But the practices of the October Revolution seemed to him lacking in such "motherly love." (It is interesting to note that the third book, *Moscow,* lacks the personalization of events which characterizes the other books. Its "metaphor" is neither the static density of *Petersburg,* nor the oceanic flow of *Warsaw,* but rather the punctuating sound of machine guns.) Zachary returns to Warsaw, now under a Polish nationalist regime. He returns to Helene, the daughter of Rachel-Leah, who throughout these upheavals has stayed quietly at her task of teaching and comforting little children. Amidst the political holocausts, Helene has continued in her steady modest service.

Zachary's way from Petersburg to Warsaw to Moscow, and back to Warsaw, appears as a circular route. In Warsaw, Zachary had come to the conclusion that the only way the Jewish masses could be restored to health was by enclosing them within the productive life of modern industry, run on a cooperative basis —the goal which Moscow aimed at. Asch closes his story with Zachary's arrival in Warsaw leaving the reader to wonder what kind of activity, aside from a Samaritan nature, is open to Zachary. To justify his rejection of Moscow, Zachary attempted to equate "fear and cowardice" with Love and Goodness. Yet, in the narration of the events themselves, Zachary's ethical doubts appear in an awkward setting. He raises his objections to the use of force at the very time when White Guards threaten to replace "Moscow" by "Petersburg." Indeed, through the novel, Zachary is drawn as a weak and vacillating character. Asch's graphic account of Rachel-Leah's revolutionary son David

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[7] A similar transposition of Biblical admonitions into social beliefs is contained in Singer's *The Brothers Ashkenazi,* where Tevyeh, the son of a Talmudic father, turns social revolutionary. His call for a strike is couched in Talmudic imperatives for human justice. He terms scabbing a religious violation, for "this action may be likened to murder, as if a man were to rise up in the field against his brother and slay him."

is a startling contrast to his depiction of Zachary's nervous and fumbling personality. David accepts death with more affirmation than Zachary ever accepts life.

At the same time, these "doubts" which the author appears to express with regard to Zachary's way suggest that Warsaw is not simply another stage in the Ahasuerian road. For Zachary will now necessarily see Warsaw from the perspective he has gained in Moscow. His regression to Warsaw is on the same plane as his reunion with his father. And the father to whom he is now drawn has accepted the Revolution both as a Jew and as a Russian. For, to Mirkin, Russia represented the morality of "all-togetherness," and as such it merged with the idea of Judaism. Both Russians and Jews have lived so long under oppression that they have developed "a common ideal of freedom and an intense longing, a thirst for justice, a bond that is stronger than religion." Hence, to old Mirkin, the objectives of the Revolution are expressions of the Russian and Jewish soul, and, despite personal sacrifices and the loss of his wealth, he supports it to the end—a "conversion" which is easily the most impressive turn in the story of *Moscow*. Toward the close, the son recognizes the strength and dignity in his father's bearing. In going back to "Warsaw," Zachary takes that "Moscow" with him which has taught him and his father that "we Jews can only be redeemed by the last victory. For we are the last of all." This is suggested by Zachary's return to the house of Rachel-Leah. The Biblical allusion of her name (as that of her husband, Jacob) points to her as the Mother of Israel and of Mankind. Rachel-Leah is the bond between Warsaw and Moscow. She is the mother of David and Sosha, who dedicate their lives to the Revolution, and of Helene, who stays home in self-sacrificing attendance of her daily task, caring for those in immediate need of human solace.

The work of Werfel and Asch illumines variations of that spiritual Judaism which seeks an integration which permits transcendance. This co-mixture points to its fusion of Protestant and Catholic directives. Historic coordinates have contributed towards the Jew's "protesting," critical approach, his open universe allowing for "reformations." But this questioning temper is joined to a profound desire for order and system, for a Catholic or universal view and state. The conjunction of these elements prevents its dissidence from becoming cold negation, and its acceptance from taking the form of frozen dogma. At this hour, the Jew along with the many whose spirit cannot sanction dictatorial coordinations are wanderers in a no-man's land. This makes for disquiet and wretchedness. But, in it, there is the throbbing of the blood in the adventure of creative beginnings and destinies. In *A Christian Looks at the Jewish Question,* Jacques Maritain writes: "Like an activating ferment injected into the mass, [Judaism] gives the world no peace, it bars slumber, it teaches the world to be discontented and restless as long as the world has not God; it stimulates the movement of history."

RICHARD POSNER:

The Grave

One day, not very long ago, I was out on one of my customary hikes. What I usually do is get to the depot about five a. m., take any bus that happens to come along, and ride until the sun's bright and the scenery seems worth exploring.

Part of the fun is not knowing where you're going. Naturally, sometimes I'm in for a disappointment, but nine out of ten times it's as exciting a way to start the week-end as anything I know. Especially in the spring or fall. Not enough people, I'm afraid, know what a bird, or a strangely shaped tree, can do to a man's blood pressure. And for a man who spends nine or ten hours a day, five days a week, in an office, there's nothing in the world more wonderful than to inhale all the country air and follow a stream of water wherever she'll take you. Maybe through a woods, or behind a farmer's barn. You don't know where you're going . . . you just watch the current pushing pebbles to one side and carrying sand along until, tired of its burden, the stream makes a sudden turn, and leaves the tiny particles behind.

On and on . . . building and tearing down again. Always moving. I wonder if a stream's really got a mind of her own?

I just kept on walking that day, never once worried about the time. You know how it is— On that kind of a day I love to swing my arms and take long, slow steps. I follow a road for a while and then I go through a field searching for a stream again. Well, that day passed, just like most of the others —filled with the tiny excitements that can't be fingered. Just moments to tuck away until . . . well, the air was so soft and clean and fresh that I walked without any thought of time. I just walked and walked. Then I remembered kneeling to catch some tadpoles. After that I must have dozed off, because when I finally woke I was mighty hungry and the stars were out bright and strong. I picked myself up and took inventory. I thought I saw a town about two miles off. By those lights in the distance I figured it didn't have more than a few thousand population. But it was really so late that I didn't realize that most of the folks were already fast asleep. I started to walk toward the lights. It was chilly and I had to flex my fingers to get the cramp out. The moon was distant and cold. Certainly everything seemed different from the afternoon. I hurried, since nature was fast losing her usual evening charm.

About ten minutes after I reached the outskirts of town I passed a yard in which someone was shoveling something or digging a hole. I thought maybe someone was digging for worms. I climbed over the fence. I really think I was hoping a man was digging worms for fishing, someone friendly enough to let me join him—that is, after I got a bite to eat. The moon was behind the clouds, so I just followed the sound. It was a steady and rhythmic sound, yet so calculated and definite that if I had given it some forethought—as I do such

things during a business day—I might have become frightened. Pretty soon I thought I heard talking. I groped along, stubbed my toe and finally saw a man's silhouette against the sky.

He was mumbling to himself. His shovel was almost as tall as he—and he wasn't a short man by any means, though on nights like that, with a man outlined against the sky, I'll admit it's hard to judge.

Before I could say hello, he looked up, said "Howdy," and continued to dig. "Guess you've come to hear about Edie and me. Make yourself comfortable. That stump'll do."

Partly out of curiosity, mostly out of obedience, I sat down.

"I might just as well start from the beginning," he said without once looking up. "That's if a man can ever find a beginning. Well, I'm forty-three, and my wife's four years younger. We married eight years ago last April.

"I wasn't ever the mushy sort. My courting was usually done with two pound boxes of chocolates or a picture show. Edith liked milk chocolates and could put up with my taste for movies with sad endings. So, as I was saying, without much to-do we were married eight years ago last April.

"That first year—most nearly every Sunday in spring—we used to take the bus to the Johnson City botanical gardens and walk among the cherry trees. I don't know if that's what newlyweds are supposed to do, but we did it. Sometimes I'd kiss her when no one was looking. She used to say that that made me feel foolish and that's why I did it. She always said that I was just like some spoiled kid. Well, I'd kiss her, and then we'd both walk along casual-like. It wasn't at all like being married, if you know what I mean.

"Well, after a while it was only natural that both of us should want a family. I preferred a boy. And Edie never really said so, but I know that she was kind of hankering for a boy too. We both decided not to be too particular, however, so we never really talked about it being a boy or girl. We'd have been happy with either one. So a boy was born, only dead. The doctor said it was too bad, but he didn't think Edie would have any children any more.

"Do you think my wishing for a boy could have anything to do with it?

"You should have seen us that winter! Edie came back from the hospital and wanted to take everything in from one end of town to the other. We ate dinner out all the time. Even went to shows and the night club. She never drank anything hard, though. 'Might kill the child,' she used to say.

"I kind of felt it would hurt her too much to remind her that she wasn't still carrying the kid, so I just never said anything. She soon tired of the night life and we settled down again to meals at home. She's a mighty good cook. Her steaks are really something. Lord, what a flavor. But I'm off the track again. It makes me so warm to talk, and my hands and feet are just about numb. Been here a good few hours digging this hole.

"Well, after we settled down that winter, everything went along pretty much as usual. Her cooking got better and better, and we kept the nursery door closed so as not to remind us. Everything went along pretty well, as I said, except for one thing. Edie kept complaining about a pain in her right

side. Every time I'd mention a doctor either she'd make believe she didn't hear me, or else say that the pain would go away pretty soon. I was sure it was appendicitis. One night the pain came so strong she let me call the doctor—only it wasn't old Doc Lempkin, because she made me call this young Doctor Howard. He's a good-looking young fellow. I guess she figured Lempkin was so gnarled and ugly that looking up into his face would scare the pain out of anyone. Yes, you heard me right. I said, scare the pain out of anyone. You see, the doctor told me afterward that my wife just didn't want to lose the pain, and it was just something she imagined anyway. He gave me some pills for her nerves and told me not to say anything to her about what he just told me. He came back every afternoon for a week and used to rub her side where she said she had the pain. I don't know why he used to rub her side if there really wasn't any appendix trouble, but that's what he did. He was so gentle it was a pleasure to watch. Well, after that week she never complained of the pain again.

"It was about eight or nine months after that appendix business that something kind of strange happened. She bought light blue yarn and all the other knitting paraphernalia and took sewing lessons. She wanted to make baby clothes. At first I thought it was for a friend. Lord, she went about it with loads of pep. I haven't ever seen anything else quite like it in her. One night I asked her whose baby she was knitting for. She looked up at me surprised and hurt, answering, 'Ours, of course.'

"She didn't get any further than the first sleeve, however, before she pulled it apart. I didn't want to question her about it, since, after all, knitting's a woman's business. She never made that sleeve again. But every night, after the dishes were washed, she'd sit opposite me in an easy chair, cross both legs under her and go through the motions of knitting. She'd have the wool right there on her lap, but she'd never use it. Instead, she'd work hour after hour with the empty needles. I became so used to the dull clicking of the needles that I actually began to look forward to that sound. It became so warm. You should have seen her sitting there so intent with the lamp dropping its light across her shoulder. I used to put my paper down and just sit and watch her expression. I loved the lines moving up the base of her nose, and the way she'd twist her mouth after whispering to someone, 'dropped one.'

"When she finished a night's work she'd carefully put the ball of wool away in a small cloth bag. She never put the needles in the same bag, but always placed them alongside the bag. She was mighty careful with those needles.

"I must seem foolish now, standing here with a shovel near a hole in the ground, but you'll understand. Anyway, being here gives me a chance to talk. The night helps too.

"I told you about her steaks, didn't I? I can taste one now, they're that good.

"Let's see. Oh yes, well, any fool could see what was ailing Edie. So we decided to adopt a child. It didn't matter, as I said before, whether it would be a boy or a girl, just so long as it belonged to us and we could love it.

"Everything was just wonderful that day we went out together to the home

for adopting children. Oh, you could just touch the spring in the air. I even opened my mouth so I could drink it in. 'Watch out,' Edie joked, 'or you'll catch a mosquito.' I don't think I would have minded a mosquito in my mouth.

"But everything went wrong. We were both given blank cards to fill out. Where it asked how many children we had I wrote, 'none,' but Edie wrote, 'six.' There it was, plain as day, 'six.' I tried to say it was a mistake, but Edie stuck to her story. 'He knows I have six children,' she insisted. I took her home. She didn't say a word to me on the bus. Just sat with her hands folded, and looked straight ahead. When we reached the house she broke down and started to cry. Thank God. I think that was the first time I'd seen her cry since our trouble began. I cried a little too.

"Something had to be done. But she wouldn't see a doctor. And I was afraid that if I started to explain a few funny things, they wouldn't understand. All she needed was a baby, or something she could really put her mind to. That's how I came to think of a dog. Funny, isn't it, that it should have come to me sudden-like, that maybe what we needed was a dog. And you don't have to sign a lot of answers to get a dog either.

"But before I get to the dog I've got to tell you something else about those knitting needles. You see, one day I was putting some things on my bedroom table and, sure as Sunday, I stuck my finger on one of those damn needles. Guess I lost my temper and cursed a bit, too. Well, anyway, without thinking, I put them away in another drawer. What happens, but that evening Edie comes in the living room as usual and sits in a soft chair opposite me, crossing her legs. Then I hear some low crying. Poor Edie, she didn't want to disturb me. She was crying because she couldn't find her knitting needles. 'I'll get them,' I said. But I guess there was something in my voice that she kind of felt was asking her what my voice couldn't. She knew I wanted to ask why she always needed those needles. So, just as I'm leaving the room, she stops crying and says real kind and gentle-like, 'You see, I need them to pull out the stitches from my operation. It won't heal, dear, unless I pull out the stitches.' That's what Edie said, and I went and got the needles.

"Well, we got a dog. But not until after I had to hear a lot of complaining from Edie. She insisted that she wouldn't have a dog in the house and what a mess they are and how she was really afraid of them anyhow. Honest, it was wonderful to hear her put up a fight that way. She'd actually stick out her chest at me and say, 'Look here, there'll be no dog in my house.' She'd wave her finger, too, and get all flushed. God, it was just like the old Edie. 'No dog in my house, mister. It's either me or the dog, mister,' and I'd just smile at my old Edie and pick her right up in the air. She'd protest and kick her feet, and then lean her warm face against my shoulder. Gee, it was good. I used to feel like saying, 'Edie, why can't you be like this all the time?' But I didn't dare.

"You see, I knew that in a few minutes she'd be herself again, her hands hanging stiff and dead at her sides, her body the stem of some dry weed. God,

it was the fingers I hated to see. Her long, wonderful fingers just hanging there, not saying anything.

"On certain days the color used to come back to Edie. Not often, mind you, but on one of those rare days she'd come alive again. Those were the days that tortured me. Let a person be dead or alive, I say, but not both. Well, on one of those days when she lost her waxiness, she came over to me—it was a Saturday afternoon—and said, 'Well, let's get going to look for a dog. Mind you, no females. I don't want a hundred puppies sprawled all over my house.'

"I remember putting on my new suit for the occasion. Sounds funny, doesn't it? But a man's got to wear his best suit sometime. Walking over to the bus that afternoon reminded me of the afternoons we used to go to the botanical gardens.

" 'Want some chocolates, Edie?' I asked, but she didn't answer.

"Well, there were some awfully cute cockers in two pet shops. But I had my heart set on something that grew up bigger. I wanted something real strong. I felt that that was more what Edie needed. There were also dachshunds, but, well, who wants anything so close to the floor, if you know what I mean. Anyway, I finally decided to take a look around at the dog pound. I didn't even know where to find the place, but we got there. Edie wouldn't go down the cellar with me to where they kept the dogs. The howls kind of scared her, I guess.

"What a noise they made by the time I reached the bottom of those steps! The keeper laughed and said they smelled my flesh.

"He walked around the place with me and I kept getting more disappointed every second. There were all kinds and shapes, but mostly females. They sure fussed over me . . . But I was ready to give up. There was only one cage left. 'Any males?' I asked. 'Yep,' the keeper answered. Lord, what a filthy lot they were. And they sure were hard to tell one from the other. But there was one thing I noticed. When I came up to the cage the whole lot, except one, ran towards me and yelped to beat the band. Standing apart from the others was this black and white animal. He looked pathetic. He seemed so out of place. Those two sad eyes attracted me beyond the whole wolf-pack. Yes, he had me caught and wouldn't let go. He wouldn't bark like the other dogs, either. Even the long tail remained absolutely motionless.

"Meanwhile the other animals tired of their positions against the fence. They left, not one by one, but all together. It was then that this black and white statue took a deep breath—I'm sure he must have taken a deep breath—and slowly walked over to the fence. He was an aristocrat for one moment longer and then he turned his profile against the wiring and with this one motion begged all the affection there remained in me to give. Yes, he was my dog—Boy.

"How is it, you ask, that we came to call him 'Boy?' Well, that's not a very long story. But first let me tell you something else. We tied a clothesline to an old leather collar around his neck, and so doing, the keeper patted him saying, 'You've got a thoroughbred English Pointer there. He's young and mighty

strong too.' Could he have understood? At the word 'strong' his muscles tensed and he pulled us up the stairs after him. It scared me. I didn't know how I'd hold onto the rope. Out in the street I kept calling, 'who-a boy, easy fellow, easy boy,' and poor Edie, not knowing whether to be happy or sad, trailed behind me laughing. Yes, Edie seemed better already.

"How well I remember the first time I washed him—the way he pulled back every time I raised the soapy washcloth, and how he would crawl so reluctantly forward again, allow a moment's rubbing, then retreat again. He was wet and bedraggled. I pitied him; someone once washed me behind the ears too. I was all for giving up and decided it might be better to get out the grime and dirt at several sittings, but Edie was stubborn. 'That thing doesn't come in my house unless it's clean,' she said. 'Well, boy,' I said, looking down at his dripping whiskers, 'that means you get the works.'

"The way Edie stood over us I think she wanted his very soul purified.

"You should have seen him—all wrapped in a big bath towel. And when I took it off even Edie laughed at the way he'd shake himself like a rolling barrel. Those long ears flapped so fast for a minute I'd have sworn it was a propeller tuning up. Yes sir, every motion, every quiver of his wet, black snoot, or his husky fanny, was exciting.—What would he do next? When would he bark? Can he bark? Will he sleep on the scatter-rug near the stove? Is he happy? That first night we watched every movement, each reluctant tail-wag for some sign. Hungry as he must have been, that first night, he was particular over his tin of liver, chicken broth, and carrots. 'Carrots are good for you, boy,' Edie pleaded, 'carrots are good for you. Make you grow big and strong. Carrots are good for you.'

" 'Lord, Edie,' I joshed, 'How much bigger do you want him to grow?' She just stared at me that peculiar way of hers and turned back to the dog as if to say, 'Don't listen to him.' She turned around and bent over him again saying, 'Eat your carrots, Boy.'

"Well, at first we took him out all the time on a leash like the dog book said to, but soon he seemed to like us pretty well, so I'd take it off whenever we'd go to the small park near here. He'd romp and gallop just like a horse and sometimes push his black snoot right into the piles of leaves as he ran. Yes, for the first time in a long while I was noticing the seasons. Autumn, with all the red and dirty-gold leaves. Nope, I'm not afraid to say I loved them with their crunch underfoot. They were preserving something inside of me I thought was dead.

"I leaned against one of the thick, tall maples and threw a stick over Boy's head and shouted, 'Get it, Boy; get it, Boy.'

"And when he came running back with the piece of wood—so fast I thought he would surely crash into me—we both laughed. Yep, that was the first time I saw Boy with the soft black flesh of his under jaw pulled back into his mouth so's his big white tooth stuck out on one side and made him look like a silly fool.

"Yes, we were both happy that day. And walking home with him alongside me, both of us slushing through those leaves, I thought how nice every-

thing could be. Then I saw a sparrow, oh, about thirty feet away, and all of a sudden I thought of robins. I don't know why, but it really wasn't a sparrow I saw, but a robin. So I picked up a small twig and ran toward it threatening. Just like a damn fool, I threatened it and yelled on top of my lungs to get the hell out of here you damn robin sticking out your breast for all the world to see it's spring. Only it wasn't spring and the sparrow flew away.

"I leashed Boy again, and he pulled me off toward home. Yes, I know I promised to tell about his name, only now it seems so unimportant. No, that's not really so. Out here in the cold those are the things that are important. The little things; just the unimportant little things. They're mostly all I remember anyway. The big things are so much harder to hold and touch.

"Well, as soon as we got him, Edie and I tried to think up names. First there was Storm, only he didn't seem too stormy. Then Edie thought she'd like Ernest, but I convinced her that it wouldn't do. Sometimes, though, I'd swear she whispers, 'Ernest.'

"Anyway, Prince, King, Sport, Spot, and Duke seemed much too ordinary. Once we thought of naming him after a Russian hero, but it was too long to shout in the street. So all the time we were thinking about a name to call him, we'd just say, 'Here, boy. Here, boy,' until he answered to Boy so well that we decided it would be easiest to leave it that way. I'm awfully glad it wasn't anything more high-falutin. After all, real kings don't have to be called King all the time, and as I think I said once before, Boy was a pure-blood aristocrat, though I'm not saying it mightn't have been pure street-chance that his folks met and married—and not because of breed but because of the air and the sunshine and the leaves.

"We had him just a little while when a warm Sunday comes around that made Edie think it was just the time to give him a real bath in the cellar tub. You should have seen us down there. Even Edie tried to coax him into the tub, but no go. I had my pockets filled with big biscuits to hold out in front of his nose when the going got tough. He was stubborn as hell. 'Look,' Edie kept saying as she splashed around with the water, 'it's good. Umm, it's so nice and warm and goody. Umm yum-yum.' But he'd slink again on his stomach. Then I'd yell at him and he'd whine short, high-pitched sounds and bounce the tip of his tail up and down against the dirty floor. Then he'd grin nervously for a second. He'd raise one paw from under his chin as if to push me away. 'Oh, you poor, fool dog,' I'd say and get real gentle with him. Then, when that didn't help, I'd try to pull him to the tub. But it didn't help either.

"And not only wouldn't the biscuits bring him any closer to the tub, but when I finally gave him one, he refused to touch it. He was that nerved up. Edie and I finally quarreled—she said I yelled at him too much—and she ran up to the apartment bawling.

"Well, he finally let me give him a sponge bath like I did the first night, and I've never asked him to get in a tub again.

"After I rubbed him dry—he tried to help me by licking the soap off his fur—I decided that he could romp around outside in the sun. I knew that

there wouldn't be many more days like that one before the snow would come. He romped and jumped around and seemed to have forgotten all about the bath. And I stood watching him. I stood on the front lawn with my shirt sleeves rolled up. My bare arms felt so good I wanted to take my shirt off and roll around on the dying grass, just like Boy. But the neighbors would see and think it strange. 'Go ahead, Boy,' I called, 'jump around and have a good time and get yourself dirty.' Our lawn is high above the street. Looking down at everyone walking by all dressed up for church, I felt happy and free.

"When Boy ran across the street toward a small dog, I paid no attention and went in the house, expecting him to come back when he was ready. I expected him to come back on his own accord, the way he'd been doing the day before. The sun was still bright and I knew that he was having a swell time. But at the end of an hour I became fidgety. I grabbed a jacket and walked in front of my house, to the corner, around the block, and all over the neighborhood, calling Boy. The sun started to drop and show its shape, and the air felt much cooler by the time I got back in front of the house. I called a few more times and knew, even if I really couldn't see them, that all the neighbors were listening to me call my dog, and were laughing and making fun of me.

"Well, he didn't come back that night or the next day either. We ran an ad in the paper and I just about gave up hope of ever seeing him again. For two days steady I went out in the street calling after him until I didn't even notice my voice anymore. Edie walked around the house without saying a word. She started carrying her needles around with her. She'd hardly drop them for more than a second, and when she did, they'd always be some place where she could see them. I couldn't go to work because every time I heard a dog bark I'd run out on the porch. The next day the ad ran again. About two that afternoon a neighbor's kid rang the bell and was all excited because he said he saw our dog down the street, heading toward the house.

"And sure enough, a minute later I saw Boy in front of the house, smelling at the steps. I couldn't even say, 'Here, Boy.' I just waited and there he came up the steps with his head low and his body looking like it was all ribs and shoulder blades. He got up to my feet, and without even barking, dropped on the porch exhausted. You should've seen Edie and me chase around for food. The poor thing was starved. I guess we could've killed him with all that food we were so excited. I've got to hand it to Edie, she had better control than I. She kept singing all the time, while all I did was cry a little. Not much, but enough to know that Edie would be able to make fun of me about it some day.

"Can you blame me now for being cold? I'm so cold inside of me and wanting to be colder still. If only I could fall now on my knees and kiss the earth and hug it until she begged me to let go. I'm pulled together inside, all tight in the stomach, yet not tight enough.

"And now the moon comes out and stares and fills the yard with her stupid grin. Why can't I just talk all this over with myself? Must she always send someone to listen? I'm just digging. Can't you see? I'm standing in my yard and digging into the ground.

"So we were a family. And we were both good to Boy, and he got to love us and we spoiled him and yelled at him and sometimes wouldn't let him sit on the good couch and then again sometimes would let him sit on the good couch. And I began to feel warm about Edie all over again. It was like having a mother in the house. Now that we had Boy there wasn't hardly ever much reason to go out. So we stayed home.

I read the papers and Edie cooked and baked late at night for the fun of it. Sometimes she'd make fancy meat dishes for Boy and then again sometimes she'd insist on making apple pies to get him jealous because he couldn't eat any. It was a good happy life in its way, mostly because things were quieter, and Edie hardly ever got excited, and with Boy around, I could kind of forget what I wanted to forget. And after all, how much more can any man ask? As I said, I'm not a youngster, and having passed forty made me figure that maybe I had a rich happy life without even knowing it.

"By now Edie was sort of like any wife who's married a while, I guess. She had her duties and that was something for me to be thankful for. She gave me a clean house and good meals. And there was no use getting excited about how it would be if things had started different.

"But things were so nice, you know what I mean—after all that went on before—things were so nice that I just thought I'd be satisfied if they never changed, but ended up quietly with Edie, Boy, and me all moving or sitting in our own way. But I couldn't feel that way long. Even when I wanted things to stay the same I began to think how nice it would be if Boy was really our son. In the back of my head sometimes, while I read the evening paper and had my feet resting on the stool, I could hear Edie drop casual remarks to Boy about the weather, or the trouble with putting too much cinnamon in apple pie, and I could hear him follow her on the linoleum. And from the back of my head the sounds moved up closer, as if trying to touch behind my eyeballs, and made me drop the paper and dream of what it would be like to really have a son, to have really had that baby that was born dead. It was Edie's fault, I'd think, because every now and then she'd say how nice it would be if Boy were just a little bit more human. Or, maybe it wasn't her fault at all, but his, because as I said before—he wasn't like most dogs and did things with his paws, or the way he'd lie on his underside like the Egyptian sphynx and follow us with his eyes like some wise old man, that made me think that only one degree more would make this animal the thing we wanted. I had all I could do to convince Edie that hunting dogs don't wear pretty sweaters.

"Then one night, just as I was sitting down for dinner, Edie said, 'You know, Boy can talk.' All I said was that it was nice, and thought to myself that I hope to hell she doesn't start telling me what he said. She didn't say anything more about it. Edie was a smart one. She just waited until I'd hear for myself.

"It happened the next morning, while I was putting on my rubbers. He walked over and kept jabbing at me with one paw as if trying to say something. This wasn't unusual. But when I pushed him away, so I could walk without

tripping over him, he started to choke and make sounds as if he were trying to bring up phlegm. I got scared and tried to run for some water to give him when the sounds got loud and awful like an idiot-child trying to say something. I almost screamed, it came so sudden. Then he jumped up on me while I stood there, and still making those sounds, he pushed his face up toward mine, trying to kiss me.

"From that time on it only seemed like days before everything strange began to happen. Maybe it was weeks. First his tail didn't move the way it always used to. It just hung all the time, as if a rag were tied to his body. It got so I wished the damn thing would fall off the rest of his body. If I didn't hate blood so, maybe I'd have cut it off. Anyway I expected it to fall off by itself any second. Then—maybe it was months instead of weeks—all the hair began to fall off his ears. I used to love their silky smoothness. And there they were pink and bare like the skin of a rotted peach.

"I never let him out of the house any more. You see, I still loved him. But what did I really love? Was this thing, this creature of our desire, the result of two bodies? Was he now really half Edie and half me? He was changing every day closer to what I wanted and farther from what I loved.

"I'd let him out of the house only late at night when the streets were deserted. I'd have him on a strong leash. But really, which was the prisoner—Boy pulling the leather from a neck-collar, or me holding the empty end?

"Why did I still love him? Maybe it would have been better to let him roam the streets where all the neighbors could look and scream or laugh. Maybe I would have let that happen. But he was mine now. All mine and Edie's. And they would have taken him away. They wouldn't have understood, they wouldn't have fed and kept him. They would have only destroyed him. They would have no reason. Only I could be allowed to find a reason, because he belonged to me. And, hanging onto that leash, I felt strong and alive again.—Some men part their hair different when they reach forty, but I had nothing to fear, because now I owned as I never owned before. Now I could take him on long walks into the fields and touch the endless umbrellas and reach right through them, and stand straight and yell on the top of my voice and no one could hear. He would yell and I would yell and no one would hear, because we were alone and had our secret. No one ever saw his bare ears, his lifeless tail. I was careful.

"Yet I think I began to detest him. How could I pat his oily skin? But the eyes were still the same. Those pleading eyes refused to change. And Edie? Yes, you can picture Edie. She was on the floor playing with him night and day. 'He's just what I want,' she'd say. Once I came home and found him squirming around in diapers made of sterilized dish cloths. I wanted to kill her. Yet when I saw her standing in the kitchen doorway with lipstick and rouge on her face for the first time in years, all I did was walk up to her, kiss her warm, wrinkled brow and say, 'Good evening, Edie.'

"Well, one day, while I was home, he escaped. It was that fool Edie. She left a window open and somehow he crawled through it. I chased out after

him. I was afraid they'd see him.

"I found Boy a few minutes later in the little park near the house. He was crying and it was a job to get him to go back with me. He made one of those awful sounds. He was trying so hard to speak to me. I turned around and asked him if he couldn't understand me, if he didn't know why I had to do this? He waited a moment, licked the palm of my hand, and followed alongside me.

"We walked slowly. I didn't care anymore. Let people see. Let the whole world see. 'This is the son of Edie,' I called, 'this is the son of Edie.' But they passed by us. Not one stopped. 'See, he's mine. He's mine and Edie's. He's been living with us,' I shouted. 'Take him,' I begged, 'take him and love him. Love him and kill him.' But they wouldn't listen. They hardly looked at me. I pointed to Boy. I said, 'He's one of you now. He's human.' But no one seemed to notice him. They just looked at me and walked past us. Maybe it's because he wasn't anything they'd ever expect to see, so they just didn't see him. Or maybe they were too busy to see, so they just didn't see him. Or maybe they were too busy with themselves. I don't know. And I don't care anymore."

He shook his head slowly, looked up at the clouds, smiled, and raised his shovel once again. He put every ounce of strength into its downward thrust, and was carried with it over the hole. He leaned with his full weight against the handle, and finally, resting one knee on the ground, started to pry the shovel loose. He couldn't get it out. Then he just shrugged his shoulders, and sat on the ground with his feet hanging over the side of the hole. Suddenly I felt a kind of shaking under me. It was like sitting on a bowl of gelatin. The earth around the hole started to crumble. My compaion leaned back for a second and smiled at the moon. Then he bent forward and looked into the hole as if expecting to catch his reflection. He grabbed a handful of the crumbling dirt, waved to me, and slid feet first into his hole.

I heard only the intimate whisper of a relaxed and grateful garden. The moon, still aloof and cool, glanced from behind its cloud and quickly took shelter behind another veil. Water started to flow from the hole. First just enough to be re-absorbed by the earth. But soon it poured forth in a delightful volume that swept away all before it. I was fascinated. It was working its way downward, right in front of me. I stood up. I could hear my own gastric juices blending with the spring. I remember standing on top of the stump so as not to get my feet wet, and wondering where I could get a steak, or if I should follow this new stream toward another adventure. Or whether I should run to the next house and tell them that their neighbor just drowned. I just stood there that way trying to figure out which course to follow. It was so pleasant, with the water rushing by . . .

ANKEY LARRABEE:

Prothalamium

Ophelia's idiot smile reflects
The fishes' faces.
As they wreathe about her brows
In the dark river spaces.

The darting minnow glitters now
On azure breast.
A ring of weed upon her hand
The bride's at rest.

Song of a Changeling

Child, befriend the cockatrice,
Search him through the midnight grove—
Gaze unharmed, with deadly bliss
Deep into his eyes of love.

Follow him, and do his will,
Scaled familiar let him be,
Whose feather-lidded stare can still
All mortal curiosity.

You alone can bear the light
Of his pale, unpitying glance,
Find therein your cold delight,
Bed with lizard circumstance.

A Birthday Thought for Ryder

A seed is planted at each child's birth
Which comes to flower in the earth . . .

The gradual spinning out of bone,
The lengthening filaments of hair,
The first enchantment of the eye,—
Must, at their fullness, bring us home
And bed us down with all, to share
The sheets of clay.

Hospital

The silent walls, rushing to meet your eyes,
Know nothing now of pity or decay.
And as a spasm rocks your gaze, you find
Only a hooded stare of calcimine.

Shadows recall the birthday of a friend—
Icing, primness at tea, then in the dark
The handkerchief hero's prancings, uncle's hands
Guiding him safely from the dragon's cave.

Now, sprawled in nightmare light, grotesque with pain,
You are a twisted insect, drugged and pinned.
A medical curio without rage or love,
Shaken with nausea, mouthing your needs, ashamed.

HYMAN SCHWETZOV:

Poems to Two Paintings by Paul Klee

1. The School Girl

Out from decorous surroundings she moves
her book sack hanging from her arm, across wide avenues,
dressed in a plaid that overrules
her body, across the tracks settled by trolleys,
down the street and up the hill to the top into school.

What she wears is hers alone and can flower
from a rooftop no matter where
she can peck the fruit of dreams
from the colorful, colorless air.

But, after day, every day, her eyes loosely
fall into the hands of those who know, until,
not quite the subject of a small tragedy,
she awakens and knows. There is no more.

Too late. Her strength has been taken away
by quite material hands, beautifully. Another
end of day has come,
school has finished and copying her mother

she is no longer able to run.
Now what is there to do but grow and become
one of a grand frieze of women symbolized by one—
no longer individual, child, no longer alone,
she drops to the bed of the river and becomes
the same as any other stone.

2. Actor's Mask

In the forest
you tried to find your tracks
and did not succeed
but lost, lost
all the time one more part
of you, deceived deceiver,
you are no more,
no more like the rest of us.

No more like yourself
but a casual spirit it seems
to other spirits
hunting for a hidden place
to take off,
take off those little bands
and reveal
(Oh, you hope, one long life
in hoping)
your face, your one thin face

that belongs only to you
so that you may,
will laugh, laugh louder
just a little for the air
calm and playing
in about the mesh—
because you have not

you have
been drowned in the deep
gorge of morning
quivering with your moving
hands of color
in some deep lake.
You are no more.

JACK JONES:

An Eye Meets a Daughter of the Police

for three days an eye has been searching for its twin. the park, in which it regained consciousness, it has twice explored until exhausted. under the wheels of a truck it finds two recently freed comrades. have you seen Federico?

not today, they reply, looking at each other.

the truck departs, and all three roll unobserved into the gutter. agents of the counter-revolution are passing up and down the sidewalk, but are not able to see them.

yesterday, says one of the comrades, we thought we saw him in the tramway. but perhaps not.

disconsolately the eye rolls to the end of the street. it has not slept since Saturday; the February heat demands monopoly prices. it is forced to the decision which it has been avoiding, and sets its course for a morgue it knows of, having visited it after the June repression. men beaten to death by the police are brought her to be certified. the coroner in charge is a tool of the counter-revolution.

the eye enters on the heels of a pale-faced relative, and rolls down the side of the first corridor. it advances to the left and down stone steps falling in a quarter-circle. the light is not bright, and the floor seems to be colored red. the eye splashes into an inch of blood. terrified, it forgets its purpose, and swims back. but two fascist shadows are crawling down the stairs. the eye diverts its course into the lavatory near the foot of the stairs; and conceals itself by managing to bounce into the toilet.

four, says one of the fascists, did you say four?

some of their wounded have probably died by now. three doctors were arrested yesterday for illegal aid and comfort.

Marxists?

likely. the filth are everywhere. there is probably one of them now in the lavatory listening.

the eye is sardonic. the conversation outside continues without a break. it becomes impossible to avoid noticing that the air is not particularly pleasant. the eye accuses itself of diversionism, and continues resolute attention. but the subject shifts to the clearly Jewish prices maintained by a house catering to the unconventionally perverse. this matter is at present of no interest to the revolution, and the eye decides to leave without attempting a search for Federico. if Federico is still alive, he is probably "in control"; and if so, necessarily in hiding and will be hard to find. although the eye does not admit it, it has really little hope. it swims silently to the bottom step and by softly bouncing from stair to stair reaches the top.

for ten minutes the eye rolls down the main avenue, and then swerves into

the park. there it finds a resting place at the foot of a charming tree, which i circles to establish that it conceals no detectives. the grass is lenient, but the ey will not permit sleep until it can reach a solution. but it is not able to find any late in the afternoon it feels the need of water and thinks of the fountain in th center of the park. it passes through the vivid grass and is bouncing down th steps of a walk when a child catches it with joy. it is obsessed by violent color its consciousness is a whirlpool of red and green. "this is the end of me, but no the end of the revolution."

the child is the daughter of a fearless police captain. noticing her preoccupa tion, her mother advances with a curious smile.

I found a rubber ball, she says. it won't bounce any more.

let me see it, darling; I'll fix it for you.

the child holds the dying eye on her stiff palm. the most direct blow of th sun is barely able to contract its pupil. it gazes at the mother without emotion her smile passes into the unreal.

throw that away, darling.

what for?

I'll get you a new one tomorrow. you don't want it. throw it away.

with the child's awkwardly abrupt motion, the eye leaves her han obediently. it is dead before it touches the grass and rolls under a bush. "neve in my life," the mother thinks, "will I come into this park again." she know that here Saturday's demonstrators were killed and beaten, and she has hear the rumor that the revolution will again demonstrate this evening.

PAUL ROSENFELD:

Florine Stettheimer

A show recently on the walls of the Museum of Modern Art in New York included a brilliant American canvas, clear in tone, bright in mood, elegantly decorative, breathing personal distinction. Its title is "Family Portrait." Four finely dressed women are represented, a mother and her daughters, on what appears to be a brightly lit terrace. The pretty, intensely blue-eyed little old lady is playing solitaire with a miniature deck of cards. One daughter in velvet romantic painting-togs gracefully stands with a palette in hand; another sits, half-reflectively adream over an open book. The third poses, hostess-like at some social affair. Behind in the blue of dusk New York floats in the shapes of Radio City, the Chrysler Tower, the Bartholdi statue.

Four names are inscribed on the canvas. They are "Mother," "Carrie," "Ettie," and "Florine." The family represented here was that of the painter, the late little-known Florine Stettheimer. The spirited figure in the velvet togs is herself. When she died a few months ago, Henry McBride, the New York *Sun's* veteran art critic, wrote that she "had passed as unremarked by the general public as did the poet Emily Dickinson in the 1880's." Prophetically he added: "But when a few years shall have put the event in perspective, it will be found by the new group of connoisseurs that Miss Stettheimer's place among the artists is just as distinct and just as secure as Emily Dickinson's is among the poets."

She was an offshoot of Victorian American-Jewish society; of its most genteel, its banking circles. She had been taken abroad for her education, placed in continental boarding-schools. Her personal background was densely, overwhelmingly feminine: all mother and aunts, sisters and cousins. In its depths we suspect the existence of one of those unhappy parental relationships which sometimes make spinsters of young girls.

To the general public Florine Stettheimer was known—if known she was at all—mainly through the performance of *Four Saints in Three Acts,* the ironic little opera by Virgil Thomson. She was conspicuously one of the mainstays of the piece, as the author of its glistening cellophane stage-designs. Her paintings were infrequently exhibited. One or two figured in shows of the Society of Independent Artists and the Museum of Modern Art; but, not wishing to sell her work, she never gave it to picture-dealers.

In her home and her fantastically ornate studio in the Beaux Arts Building, for years with her unmarried sisters she maintained a salon: inevitably, like her paintings, it will figure in all accounts of the modern art movement in New York. It was a genuine gathering-place of its sort; not one of those which, in the wit's words, "set out to be salons and succeed only in becoming restaurants."

"The celebrities in the world of art and literature" periodically appeared there. God knows, on many occasions they formed notable collections of freaks. But one also met Henry Mencken, Sherwood Anderson, Georgia O'Keeffe. Artists indeed voluntarily went there and not at all merely because of the individualities of the trio of women and their tasteful hospitality. They went for the reason that they felt themselves at home with the Stetties—so the trio was called—and the Stetties seemed to feel themselves entirely at home in their company. Art was an indispensable component of the modern, open, intellectual life of the place. The sisters felt it as a living issue. Sincerely they lived it. Nor was Florine the only "creator" among them. Another of the sisters was the author of a couple of distinguished novels, *Philosophy* and *Love Days of Susanna Moore,* under the pseudonym Henrie Waste. The third, who presided at table, amused herself with the arrangement of a palatial doll-house whose "art gallery" contained a miniature replica of "Nude Descending a Staircase," made for it by Duchamp himself, and an oval Venus carved from a fragment of alabaster by Lachaise.

At the gatherings one also made the acquaintance of Florine Stettheimer's work. It hung on the walls, stood about on easels. There, were certain of her fanciful family-portraits—say, the touching full-length of the severe, ignorant Irish nurse who reared the painter, her brother and sisters, masterfully erect beside a dressing-table, surrounded by the cherubically-winged heads of her nurselings. Or the playful picture of "Henrie Waste," her cheeks aflame beneath dream-bewildered eyes, sailing on a crimson couch through the night under a blazing Christmas tree. There one also saw some of the slyly humorous autobiographic canvases narrative in the naive manner of the medieval draftsmen; presenting separate events or successions of them simultaneously within the limits of single designs. Also certain of the witty social satires: "Cathedrals of Broadway," for instance, the spoofing apotheosis of the giant Broadway movie houses, all domes, columns, beds of light with the vulgarly handsome face of Mayor "Jimmie" Walker on the silverscreen; or the rosy, elfish "Atlantic City Beauty-Contest." And sitting before these pictures probably more than one musing art-lover reached the conclusion that the painter was one of the most talented and individual artists of her sex that have appeared in English-speaking lands.

This is not quite to say that these art-lovers may be thought to have reached conclusions like Henry McBride's recent one; found themselves prepared to promise Florine Stettheimer's work a place in art comparable to Emily Dickinson's in poetry. Her body of work and the dazzling New Englander's doubtless have traits in common: the frequent ebullience of mood, the quaintly personal lyricism. Only: from Emily Dickinson there flowed lyrics as great as any written in America and the greatest uttered by any woman in the English tongue. Extraordinarily this spinster possessed the gift of imagination, the power to move the soul in us. Florine Stettheimer's gift was slighter. It was eminently for fancy, for charming or whimsical images or combinations of

them; for daintiness of workmanship and fantasy. Her canvases beguile and quicken us.

Take "Family Portrait," the brightly colored terrace-scene lately in the Museum of Modern Art. Every detail in it, every one of the minor forms cunningly assembled in the structure, surprises and diverts the eye and mind. The shapes nearly all are dainty in proportion, slightly bizarre, lacy or scalloped. Some resemble those of birds. Others resemble those of shells or objects intended for embellishment: passementerie, say, or the mouldings and the tassels and the fringes of the furniture and the draperies in elegant periods, the Louis XVth, the Art Nouveau. Meanwhile the total form rivals the theatre, the opera, even the circus. Its center is composed of three fantastic floral shapes —one silver, one scarlet, one rose, draped with pale-green streamers—that hang startlingly, lavishly, a trifle incredible before us, as though just sprung up at the wave of a conjurer's wand. Or like fantastic sky-rockets or balloons suddenly and silently let aloft. Inevitably the lavish shapes and their ascension give us the illusion of assisting at some fabulous party or scene from a baroque opera with magic effects.

Simultaneously the picture entertains with its urbane irony. There is a piquant ambiguity or doubleness in its mood and meaning. At first it appears full of a lyricism of the life of complete self-sufficience, aestheticism, independence. The four figures seem entirely engrossed in, satisfied by, an existence of amusements and refinements, beautiful decorations, art, literature; while at the top of the scene the effigy of Liberty with skirts strictly to her ankles triumphantly flaunts her torch. There is more than a suggestion of spiritual attainment in the floating flowers. Gradually, possibly because of the ghostliness of certain of the shapes and the ornamental quality of many of them, we receive a sense of elegant waste, a feeling that this life of independence and aestheticism is illusory, a bauble, a bubble. The two meanings together face us.

Finally: the conception before us is as manifestly and unmistakably feminine as is a boudoir; frail, delicate, ornate. Perhaps it is not quite characteristic of the run of women. We feel something slightly anaemic, a trifle blasé—in retreat as it were from everything primordial and earthfast—in the spirit and style. If there is springtime in this little world, we feel, it is exclusively "springtime among the saffron satins." Still the personality addressing us is gracious, tender, animated, loyal; nor are we assailed by any selfish utilization of feminine charm such as we associate with some recent French women painters—Marie Laurencin, for example. We meet no affectation here; only truthfulness to a feminine temperament which happens to be uncommon.

"Family Portrait" may well be Florine Stettheimer's museum-piece: it nonetheless typifies her performance, her over-a-hundred canvases mainly now in storage. Fantasies, decorations, witty sometimes mordant ironies, all are marvelous: like faery operas, lighted Christmas trees, the snowstorms in the little glass paperweights which used to lie on writing-tables. All are self-revelations of the uncommon temperament whose play they are; revelations of the dream it secretly bears about. In the past this temperament provided the

living ornaments of small exclusive societies, delicate as it is, lightly ironic, finely discriminative in matters of taste. But only its masculine counterpart would seem to have found expression through art, in that of the painters of the *fetes galantes* in France; of Charles Demuth, Florine Stettheimer's ally, in America. Now in her paintings it tells the world something of what it is searching for: some circumstance where everything possesses a delicacy, a daintiness, an ethereality "present in the world in no satisfying measure, or not at all"; and lends something of that charm, that grace, that etherealness not to any small closed society, but the world.

KAY DeBARD HALL:

One Hour for the Dead

This was the hour of that day:
The hour of the carved-soap white mountains,
The day of mountains of tabled granite . . .
This was the hour:
Children were in it with their lilac eyes,
With their play . . . like willows bending.
This was the land: This . . .
Shell-less snails like gardenias walking—
Gardenias lying like small wheels.
Now the dead come,
Down the remembered years,
Rising and pulling on their flesh,
Setting lights in their small eye caverns,
Curving their lips into small bows.
And these voices: These . . .
Hollow as winds from underground caves.
For this was the hour of that day, remembered,
The hour of the dead.

RUTH HERSCHBERGER:

The Lumberyard

We watched our love burn with the lumberyard,
Bats in their wheeling showed our crazèd sense,
We stood in fields where weeds with jiggers scrambled,
And stood the heat flush in our face, immense.

Softly, the crowd acclaimed the devastation,
And we, we smiled to see the embers twist,
Tottering towers and poles with flashing wires.
We shifted feet when shifting structures kissed.

Up in the sky the sparks were red stars shuttling,
Planes with a scouter's appetite hung by.
And at our backs the Negro huts were lit
With a yellow mist, a ghostly gayety.

Sound above all: the cracking and the crocked,
As bones that, whetted by the warmer flames,
Edged into death, until the crimson glow
Vanquished the knotted amber boards, the names.

All banished, all decided, all cast in;
Far back beyond, the trees made silver white
By steaming flames, rose as cold piles of cloud
To cool this mirror of the blazing night.

And we beheld, we watched, as drunk as all,
And gladdened when the bursting peaked and sprung,
Rejoiced to see the threat of fire win,
And sang to see the worthy timbers wrung.

We watched our love burn with the lumberyard,
Magnificent the sight, the sin, the shame,
The vice profusely lavished; wheeled the bats
Silent as we, but crazed, crazed as the flame.

NICHOLAS MOORE:

The Cruel Lover

We travelled both sadly and happily through the land of mountains and lakes, watching the heather and the movements of lizards in it or the small twitch of the million little gnats that rose and hovered in a cloud as your footsteps touched it, rising and biting the air, or the skin on your legs if they came in contact with it. We hummed gay and incredible songs as we walked. Dreamt then of the old days, of the past of Druids and festivals, the strange mystery of foreign folk among the mountains, ancestors who put up tombs and monuments, cumuli, tumuli and dolmina: points of stone or mounds of earth. It was as if, in the high and rarefied air of Scotland, we were again part of that past—we lived in it and beyond it.

It was there we met Mr. Colabber. He was a misty figure, old and young, whose white hair stretched down beyond his ears, but whose eyes glistened with youth. He was walking down between the rows of heather and gorse, where we had seen in the summer the young calves walking far from the valley farm or wherever it was they came from, and where too over the heath a great pig had walked, and refused to budge from the path. We had to make way for it.

"There is a good deal that is primitive about this country," said Mr. Colabber.

"We got plenty of buns at our hotel."

"Tea is all right," he said. "And fish. But then there is the sea."

He spoke in the tones of a prophet and we did not know what to make of it. We walked on and forgot him, and breathed the mountain air, sure of ourselves in this distant place. Lying on top of a hill we could see the mountains in the distance, and down below a blue lake in a green marsh, and the farmer sending his dogs out to fetch the cattle in. We were alone. We wished. We were gay.

Yet we were sad with the primitive kind of excitement that broods over such a kind of country, a place where the wind and the rock and the heather are plentiful, but where men are few, and women fewer, apart from the rich travellers and the occupants of castles and lodges, stone buildings deep in the wooded promontories, shining when sunlit among the dark pines. Few but kind. Few but rare. The inhabitants of these parts have their own wisdom, their own mirth and sadness, living in a place of peak and depression.

When Mr. Colabber clapped his hands the seas would rise, like mist from over the mountains, crawling up blue and terrible over the purple expanses of heather, of the green and brown of gorse, and the high winds would sigh, the rain fall, making its brilliant splashes on the rock and on your face as you turned into the wind.

Mr. Colabber, who was nothing but air, clapped, and the whole valley was drenched with mythological weepings. The starlings of Teresa swooped bitterly upon the valleys, and cried strangely, the dogs slunk with their tails between their legs, the bridge disappeared, engulfed in the swirling sea.

Then there were the times we sat on the cold beach, the hard, shingly beach, taking off shoes and socks, and our clothes off over our heads, to run in bathing-suits to bathe in the sea: suits that make rock of your bodies, close to the skin, showing each jagged edge and muscle to the wind.

"There is a great deal of beauty by the coast," said Mr. Colabber.

The birds flew across the sun. Their feathers were scarlet and gold, except for their tails, which were yellow streaked with blue. Never such had we seen. We never saw such birds.

But there was no doubt that before our bewitched eyes they flew, and glistened in the sun, crying like gulls and shattering our momentary illusion of nothing but seascape and land.

In the far distance we could see the puff of a steamer trailing over the horizon.

Nevertheless we did not know the story of the birds.

Out in the bay the masts of a sunk ship struck above the water at high tide. It was sunk by an air-attack, when a convoy put in, and was followed by the Germans. In that peaceful atmosphere it seemed strange, as it did too when occasionally a solitary aeroplane would wander over the mountaintops, seeming incredibly small.

This was the country of foxlove.

A boy had been turned to a fox and ran through the hills, naked in his brown fur, pursued by all human kind, because of his black miracle that made him thus. Fiercely the people of Cochcraig pursued all members of his unholy clan, fox killed after fox, but him they could never tell unless he would speak. They tortured the foxes with pokers to make them speak. The virgins held a society to brand the foxes, to kill and torture and twist, much to their pleasure. But the foxlad never turned up.

Then one day he walked into the village, but they did not know him. He was a handsome lad, and had the skin of a man. He was young, and fresh to look at, and civil to speak. The girls loved him and tried to win him for themselves, who was kinder than any man they had seen before. But the men, being jealous, could have crucified him gladly.

However, he taught them the simple arts with his hands and all would have been for the best, if the young wife of the shepherd McLardy had not had her way.

She was sweet as an April rose. Innocent, pure, a fine woman, with a pale and lovely face and a competent manner. She was one of the favored and gay in all the country. Until that time. And she was most constant in her affections. Until that time. But with this young man, young Neville, she took up.

It was secret she would go to him over the hills as he lay watching the sun

on the lake and thinking no one knows what, lying there high on the red peak, overlooking the lochs and the valleys, and the little railway on which the visitors travelled. She came up to him, and he spoke softly, and she cried.

"I love you, love you, Duncan," her eyes said.

But at first the young man ignored her tears and all the beseeching looks of her eyes, for he well knew he was under a curse from the village people, who would tear him limb from limb, did they know of his true nature. Now he was clothed and made to look like a man and his name was Duncan Neville, and nobody knew. But she would give the secret away—and she did.

He was watching the sunset when one evening she came to him, and cried, and held him close, and he could not resist her. And then the story came out.

At first she was content with a little: then she must have him entirely, or not at all.

It was then as she put her hand on his haunches she felt the fur that covered his buttocks and thighs, and knew him for the foxlad that had run away. At first she was gay, and quiet about her secret, and loved him as she would love the greatest man.

But her husband discovered her.

"Weak she was," said Mr. Colabber and clapped his lips. At any rate she betrayed him to soothe her husband's anger, saying she'd only been visiting him in the cause of duty, to find the foxlad that brought them the devil's curse.

So she was made a heroine, and Duncan Neville was tortured and crucified, like Christ before him, because he was animal, and the people feared.

He hung on his cross and blessed the people, and loved them, and spoke a special word for his faithless sweetheart.

But she drew a cross with a penknife on his forehead and mocked at the blood that dripped to the words on his lips.

Nevertheless we heard no story of the coloured birds that flashed in the face of the sun, whose feathers were scarlet and gold, tails blue and yellow.

Teresa's starlings dipped to the bridge in the storm, and the seas seemed to mount and curve above the mountains, like the Hanging Wave of Hokusai over the gentle boat.

We looked down on the lakes, and felt the cool wind in our hair.

We walked in the heat of the day to our favorite places, we sat in the sun, and burned our bodies brown.

"Do you think I look like a foxgirl, darling?" she said.

Mr. Colabber laughed as I held her close, and the birds whirred across the sun, and shadows fell on the valley, and I kissed her lips, and looked at the lakes in her eyes, till she drew me closer and in that cold air we loved.

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN:

Recent Criticism

HENRI PEYRE: *Writers and Their Critics.* Cornell University Press.
ERIC RUSSELL BENTLEY: *A Century of Hero-Worship.* Lippincott.
ANDRE GIDE: *Imaginary Interviews.* Knopf.
VAN WYCK BROOKS: *The World of Washington Irving.* Dutton.

After twenty years of more or less uninterrupted advance, modern criticism is experiencing a temporary lull, and while it is drawn back to organize and consolidate its gains, the enemy has rushed in for the kill. The counter-attacking forces, which previously ranged from the urbane and witty obscurantism of Mark Van Doren to the dull-witted journalistic incomprehension of J. Donald Adams, have now been powerfully reinforced by a book called *Writers and Their Critics,* by Henri Peyre, Sterling Professor of French and head of the department at Yale. To drop a military metaphor already sufficiently mixed, M. Peyre's book is learned, fascinating, plausible, and deeply pernicious.

Subtitled "A Study of Misunderstanding" and expanded from his series of Messenger Lectures on the Evolution of Civilization at Cornell, M. Peyre's book is ostensibly a study of the difficulty literary critics experience in correctly evaluating the work of their contemporaries. To make his point, which is that even the best of them have been woefully inadequate at it, the author has drawn on a vast reading in French, English, the Goethe part of German, and American criticism and creative writing. His examples are heaped up in giant pyramids, and he has established beyond any possibility of doubt the fact that neither Aristophanes nor Aristotle really appreciated Euripides, that Shakespeare was carped at until the Romantics, that Emerson refused to read *Moby Dick* and thought Hawthorne's fiction worthless, that Goethe was blind to most of his great contemporaries from Beethoven to Hölderlin, that Sainte-Beuve preferred George Sand and Béranger to Stendhal and Baudelaire, and that the novels of Virginia Woolf, among others, are probably vastly overestimated in our time.

Even this mountain of documentation, however, cannot obscure the two patently false assumptions on which M. Peyre rests his book: the first, that the chief, if not the only, aim of literary criticism is evaluation, with the ranking of contemporaries its crowning achievement; the second, that our current opinion about a man is invariably "right" and that his contemporaries should have had the good sense to arrive at it, that is, that standards of literary judgment are more or less absolute, and that, at least for the work of previous centuries, we have now pretty much arrived at them.

The second of these assumptions will not even bear discussion, but consistent with the first, M. Peyre finds his chief offenders in the modern, relatively

scientific, critics who have produced a critical renaissance within the last two decades, and with remarkable accuracy he singles out as targets for special abuse the four best critics of our day: I. A. Richards, William Empson, Kenneth Burke, and R. P. Blackmur. Richards and Empson are "arid and austere mountains who have brought forth infinitesimal mice"; Burke and Blackmur are lost in the "blind alley of semantic and pseudo-scientific criticism." M. Peyre is particularly scathing toward the "jargon" of Richards and Burke, while referring to their "thought" in quotation marks, and his two demands on them and their schools are that they treat the readers as "friends to be enlightened," and that they interpret literature "through a style of beauty." He makes it abundantly clear that his fury at these men is directed at their primary interest in literary analysis, rather than in his function of evaluation. "Adolescents may be temporarily seduced" by Empson's seven types of ambiguity or Burke's study of symbolic action in a poem by Keats, but M. Peyre knows that the refusal "to feel and judge" makes for something that is not literary criticism.

Here it might be worth asking who M. Peyre thinks *are* our major literary critics? Well, "the first American critic of the second quarter of our century" is Edmund Wilson. The young and promising critic who may still win this position of supremacy from him is—hold tight—Alfred Kazin! Some of our keenest critical views have been expressed by—don't relax yet—Henry Hazlitt! And to cap it off, almost the highest praise in the book is reserved for "the outspoken and brilliantly-written criticism," the "excellent" critical work, of Orville Prescott, Ralph Thomson, and John Chamberlain in the daily edition of the New York *Times*! And, by way of clarifying just what he is after, M. Peyre points out later that Allen Tate and Yvor Winters, although they do evaluate (the latter, indeed, laying about him with a baseball bat) are isolated because "none of their pronouncements is likely to affect the sale of a book."

There is no point in cataloguing M. Peyre's errors of judgment, taste, superficiality, omission, and plain fact, but a listing of a few of the high spots might be worthwhile by way of bringing into perspective the qualifications of a man who damns our foremost critics and sets out to correct our literary judgments wholesale. For superficiality: he finds "The Ancient Mariner" a work of "magic and charm," which "today a child of twelve has no difficulty in grasping at first reading," (both Burke and Richards, who have worked extensively on the poem, might legitimately snicker here), and Poe's phony aesthetics of poetry "one of the most considerable in English-speaking countries." For bad taste: he thinks Meredith's poetry "lastingly beautiful," and Keats' "Bright Star" sonnet "perhaps the most beautiful single sonnet in the English language." (And M. Shakespeare?)

Where the matter goes beyond taste entirely, and becomes simple inadequacy of judgment: M. Peyre finds Mann's Joseph tetralogy "a monument of dulness" (sic) and finds Mann and Gide generally "pleasing and effete writers" who will not rank in the future with such "creators" as Eugene O'Neill and Robinson Jeffers. For errors of omission: he omits any mention of

one of the greatest of modern French poets (if only for his Pierrot poems), Jules Laforgue, in a list that includes Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Lautréamont, Corbière, and Charles Cros; while the only explanation he vouchsafes for the sometimes brilliantly effective typography and punctuation of E. E. Cummings is that it is all "meaningless." Finally, for plain errors of fact, among others: the hero of *Wuthering Heights* is named Heathcliff, not "Heathfield"; Ezra Pound does not "demand that we be familiar" with Catalan literature since he himself has never been; and the name of E. E. Cummings may legitimately be spelled "E. E. Cummings" as names traditionally are, or "e e cummings" as the poet seems to prefer, but certainly not "e. e. cummings," which is only evidence that the reason M. Peyre thinks Cummings' typography meaningless is that he is not accustomed to noticing it very clearly.

No book, however, is wholly without value, and *Writers and Their Critics* contains several good things, one or two of them accidental. For anyone who wants it, the book furnishes a monumental omnibus of the foolish or capricious judgments of writers made by critics or other writers. Frequently in his book M. Peyre calls for the establishment of a sociology of literary taste, a scientific study of the reactions of the public to literature, and although seemingly not aware that an embryonic one exists in such works as L. L. Schucking's *Die Soziologie der Literarischen Geschmacksbildung* (published a few months ago in England as *The Sociology of Literary Taste),* he does suggest a number of vitally needed studies such a field should concern itself with.

Many of M. Peyre's incidental judgments of literature, particularly those of modern English and American poetry, are quite sharp; much of his miscellaneous information, like his list of writers who were insane, diseased, impotent, or homosexual, is quite useful (although he then goes on to say that this data is meaningless and never affects the work); and his elaborate recital of the charges of obscurity that have been raised against every important writer from the Greeks on is particularly worthwhile, since if it has no other result it should make anyone think twice before dragging out the same motheaten charge against modern literature (as M. Peyre immediately goes on to do against Eliot, Pound, Joyce, etc.) Finally, his emphasis on the capacity for pleasure and "gusto" that the critic should bring to literature is undoubtedly a valuable corrective to a certain amount of dry pedantry, but the conclusion is inescapable, in M. Peyre's case at least, that "gusto" is merely another club with which to belabor analysis and understanding; that like the suavity of Mr. Van Doren, M. Peyre's "gusto" is merely a new sugar-coating for obscurantism.

Eric Russell Bentley, to judge from his first book, *A Century of Hero-Worship,* is a young critic whom M. Peyre would not like. That is, he is modern, post-Richards, scientific, or whatever you want to call it, in that he believes the chief aim of literary criticism to be the elucidation of works of art, the quest for insights into the man and his meanings, with evaluation and the assigning of hierarchical rank only a later superstructure built on analysis, if not indeed something to be left to the reviewers. Readers of *Accent,* where a

section of the book first appeared, do not need to be told that at twenty-seven Mr. Bentley is a brilliant and vastly talented young man, and that his book is both a remarkable job and a promise that modern criticism is not likely to remain in the doldrums for long.

The expansion of a Ph.D. thesis delivered at Yale, where presumably Mr. Bentley escaped M. Peyre's academic blight, the book is described as "a study of the idea of heroism in Carlyle and Nietzsche with notes on other hero-worshippers of modern times." It turns out to be rather more than the subtitle claims, being actually a study, in greater or less detail, of six "Heroic Vitalists": Carlyle, Nietzsche, Wagner, Spengler, Stefan George and D. H. Lawrence, with a brief section on Bernard Shaw thrown in to point up the Wagner material. With the exception of Shaw and the possible exception of Lawrence, Mr. Bentley has hand-picked a group of the most repellent figures in literature, and the objectivity with which he weighs the implications of their ideas for a democratic culture is something more than remarkable.

Relying chiefly on biographical criticism, that is, the attempt to understand ideas, philosophy and art as products of their creator's life (a method which, ironically, owes perhaps more to Carlyle and Nietzsche than to anyone else), Mr. Bentley has studied each of these men as a point of ambivalence, a pre-figuring at once of the finest of democratic values and of highbrow fascism. Inevitably, he relies heavily on psychoanalytic insights, chiefly Freudian, and has found in most cases a correlated sexual ambivalence. (It is worth noting that all his men were sexually peculiar in some fashion, from Carlyle's impotence to George's homosexuality, from Nietzsche's psychic hermaphroditism to Lawrence's homoeroticism, and even, although Bentley neglects to mention it, Shaw's prolonged virginity.)

In a day when political criticism is traditionally oversimplified, with the additional hazard of a war hysteria against pre-Nazi German thought, Mr. Bentley has resolutely refused to oversimplify. He sees these men neither as all-devil proto-Nazis nor as all-angel artist-philosophers, but as complicated, contradictory, ambivalent thinkers and artists. He finds as their central idea a concept he calls Heroic Vitalism, which on the level of political theory is Aristocratic Radicalism, on the metaphysical level is Supernatural Naturalism, and on the personal level is Superiority-Inferiority. (Note that although the first term is Brandes' for Nietzsche, the second is a reversal of Carlyle's own, and the third is chiefly Alfred Adler's, Bentley's combination of the three makes a consistent whole, emphasizing ambivalence, the oxymoronic, and what Burke calls "perspective by incongruity"). Bentley suppresses or glosses over no evidence of ugliness or inhumanity in his six Heroic Vitalists, but by constantly emphasizing what is undoubtedly the only usable doctrine for social criticism, or in fact for any criticism, the concept that "We can take what is fruitful and leave the rest," he has achieved a study that is vitally important not only for its own results but as a genuine contribution to method.

Mr. Bentley's style and mind have been compared, by at least one reviewer, with Kenneth Burke's. In the sense that Bentley is chiefly concerned, like

Burke or any other major modern critic, with subtleties of analysis, the comparison has some point; in terms of actual resemblance, except for one sentence of Bentley's about "transposing the tune of his denunciation into the key of descriptive diagnosis" that is reminiscent of Burke's phrasing, and a common liking for oxymorons, there is little real similarity, or even influence. Bentley is not interested in what might be called "deep" analysis, the attempt to get at a man's mind through the unconscious "clues" in his symbols and imagery, and except for one passage elucidating the symbolic meaning of a critical section of *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* Bentley pays little or no attention to symbolic analysis. He prefers to attack his man chiefly on the surface level, the level of the literal statement and the realistic event, but on that level he is able to obtain remarkable insights.

The chief purpose of *A Century of Hero-Worship* seems to be the abstraction, from the useless and vicious in these six figures, of that side of Heroic Vitalism which "prefigures the best of democratic thought." Bentley's own values are never formally stated, but they seem to be best exemplified by Bernard Shaw and William James: passionately democratic, pragmatic, realistic, seeing history as dynamic and man as daemonic, leaning toward positivism rather than mechanism—what he calls in one spot Heroic Socialism, and might better be called Marxist Pragmatism. Bentley draws heavily on Marxism, almost as heavily as he does on psychoanalysis, and although a more direct study of ideas in terms of the social class they speak for would have benefited him somewhat on Carlyle, for example, who cannot be understood without it, he tends to use Marxism effectively without ever falling into granville-hicksism. (It is surprising, incidentally, that Mr. Bentley does not "class-angle" Carlyle, since he does just that with Bentham, offhand, in the Carlyle chapter, and since it has been critical tradition at least since Emerson to explain Carlyle's classic opponent Macaulay automatically as a spokesman for mercantile Whig interests.) Mr. Bentley is certainly the most promising of the under-thirty critics, and nothing makes this clearer than a comparison of his scrupulously scholarly, important, and vastly stimulating book with M. Peyre's contender, the shallow, derivative, sophomoric-witty and gutless work of Mr. Alfred Kazin.

André Gide's new book, *Imaginary Interviews,* is, as literary criticism, disappointing. Gide is M. Peyre's kind of critic (as Peyre, who has no use for his novels, is forced to recognize), a latter-day Goethe who drops dogmatic evaluations from his lips like pearls. By its nature, the book has none of the unity or forcefulness of Gide's *Dostoevsky,* and it tends to fall apart into aphorisms. The comments of a great writer on literature are always worth reading, but sometimes, as in this case, not as literary criticism. Some of Gide's comments are brilliantly right, some are stimulating if perhaps wrong, and some are simply childish, as when he sees *Paradise Lost* as the first English novel or in his evaluations of contemporary American fiction, where he is obviously writing from inadequate acquaintance.

Imaginary Interviews is far more exciting as a coded political document

against Vichy and the Germans, that aspect of the book which Malcolm Cowley emphasizes in his introduction and which a number of the reviewers have sneered at. Cowley is patently right, and the book can be read almost line for line as political doubletalk, with all of the key words functioning on several levels. (Cowley has, incidentally, contributed an excellent introduction, two valuable appendices, and a remarkable translation: fluent, colloquial, and highly readable, a much smoother job than the only other translation of his with which I am familiar, that of the first series of Valéry's *Variety*.)

The most interesting aspect of the book, in connection with the Peyre and Bentley books at least, is in the ramifications of Gide's own ambivalence. "I am a creature of dialogue," he writes, and the dialogues in this case are between two dissociations of André Gide, one the old liberal writer making "resistance" statements disguised as literary opinions, and the other a brash young Vichyite interviewer expressing fully as many of Gide's ideas. Gide obviously feels, as does Mann, a perverse pull toward the forces of evil as well as a pull away from them, and in fact, one piece of his, a review of the French collaborationist writer Chardonne, is a startling parallel to Mann's curious self-projection into Nazism in the essay called "Bruder Hitler."

It is not hard, in Gide's case, to relate the whole formal structure of the book—the complicated deviousness and concealment, the bi-polarization, the perverse anti-sociality, the attraction-repulsion to Nazism, even the form of the "imaginary interview" itself—to his homosexuality. The parallel with Nietzsche, whom Gide proclaimed in *Dostoevsky* as one of his gods, is striking; the repetition of a similar political ambivalence on the base of some form of sexual ambivalence, and it is amusing to note that Gide thus at once confirms the usefulness of Bentley's method and mocks Peyre's doctrine of the irrelevancy of a writer's "wound" to his art. (A theory, incidentally, that Bentley and Gide, as well as Edmund Wilson, owe to Nietzsche's own explicit framing of it.) As a further footnote to M. Peyre, it is worth recalling his amused sneers at the critics who claimed to find Proust's French incorrect. Gide establishes their charge fully, with examples, on pages 23 to 25 of *Imaginary Interviews*.

"It is only an auctioneer who should admire all schools of art," Oscar Wilde wrote in the *Pall Mall Gazette* half a century ago, and there is probably no better statement with which to begin a discussion of Van Wyck Brooks' Book-of-the-Month Club opus, *The World of Washington Irving*. Like his two earlier books in the series, it is passionately uncritical, with no point of view, no standards, no depth, no ideas, and love for everyone. Unlike them, it lacks even a subject, in the sense that the New England books were about a cultural climate, the interstices *between* the writers, while this book has only the specious unity of two dates, and no more organizing principle than the idea that any pre-Civil War American writer not discussed in the New England books ought to be included somewhere. The book is certainly not either literary history or the history of ideas, as a comparison with Taine, Brandes, De Sanctis or Parrington makes clear, and it is hard to say precisely what it is, unless

perhaps a work of literary chit-chat, or a mosaic of scraps from old letters and documents.

"It seemed to Allston highly important that we should possess an American memory, and this had driven him into historical writing," said Van Wyck Brooks in his last book. "What could contribute more to the stiffening of American writers, promoting their maturity and health, giving them the sense of a group to which they are responsible, affording them stability and purpose?" It is instructive to compare this noble statement of purpose with the flabby cheeriness of the present volume, the half of each page devoted to vast footnotes giving World Almanac figures on the number of silos in the country in 1807 or the genealogy and involved family relationships of obscure writers. ("He was much concerned with his genealogy," Brooks said of Alcott in *The Flowering of New England*. "At fifty-four, why not?")

There have been many Brooks personalities in the course of his fifteen volumes—the aesthete, the socialist, the Freudian, the manifesto-writer, the keen biographical critic of Wells, the Procrustean critic lopping and stretching James and Twain to make them fit a one-sentence thesis, etc.—but surely any of them, even the Tolstoyan book-burner of *Opinions of Oliver Allston,* is preferable to the present spineless compiler of literary pastiches and travelogues. For example, Brooks has learned by now that America has a folklore (in the first, or unrevised, version of his *Ordeal of Mark Twain* he wrote that we are a nation with "no folk-music, no folk-art, no folk-poetry, or next to none, to express it, to console it") and consequently throws miscellaneous street-cries and tall tales into his book in great gobs (incidentally not bothering to credit Constance Rourke or any of his other sources.)

The only actual criticism Mr. Brooks attempts in the new book is an analysis of Poe, which overrates him vastly, including his learning; distorts the facts of his life and vilifies his adopted father; claims at least fifteen of his shoddy poems as great and one as "miraculous;" and develops the awe-inspiring theory that Poe's work had its source in the insecurity of his life. This, along with the statement that Melville "acquired in the forecastle the tragic sense of life," is the faint spot left when a biographical method has evaporated. In the early books, Brooks used to quote Brandes extensively; in the present volume, there is only an echo, on one page, of a celebrated phrase of Taine's. A note in *The World of Washington Irving* promises a fourth and concluding volume to the series on the period of Whitman and Melville. Biographies of both were early projects of Brooks' before he wrote his Literary Guild *Life of Emerson* and fell in love simultaneously with the Idyll of American Literature and the Book Club. (*The Flowering of New England,* let us note for posterity, "headed best-seller lists for fifty-nine consecutive weeks.") It will be interesting to compare his treatment of Melville with the "Notes on Herman Melville" he published in *Emerson and Others* and has never since reprinted.

Although Van Wyck Brooks put himself viciously on record in the *Allston* book against modern criticism as a form of "cross-word puzzle," and is thus an ally, M. Peyre treats him very harshly as a critic "who never fulfilled his

promise," meaning principally that he intrudes criteria of morality and that he fails to evaluate. As the recent eruption of the old De Voto squabble testified, it is Brooks' curse to be disliked and attacked by his allies as bitterly as by his enemies. Considering that in his new book he handles Timothy Dwight just as affectionately as he handles Tom Paine, and that he is possibly the only writer living who has managed to praise and like Jefferson, Hamilton and Aaron Burr equally, Mr. Brooks shouldn't mind. By now he is probably immune to distinctions.

ARTHUR MIZENER:

Recent Poetry

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS: *The Wedge.* The Cummington Press.
MARIANNE MOORE: *Nevertheless.* Macmillan.
MARGUERITE YOUNG: *Moderate Fable.* Reynal and Hitchcock.
ROBERT LOWELL: *Land of Unlikeness.* The Cummington Press.
W. H. AUDEN: *For the Time Being.* Random House.

Dr. Williams—like, I suppose, all good writers for whom poetry is an avocation,—thinks of poetry as a natural activity, nearer to eating than to metaphysics. By "composition" in the mind, he reasons,

> the scenes we see move
> and, as it may happen, make
> a music, a poetry
> which the poor poet copies if
> and only if he is able.

Thus for him the problem of making a poem is the problem of making a speech which will follow the pattern of the mind's movement. Too formalized a pattern he distrusts, as he distrusts a speech not native or a kind of thinking too deliberately trained. When Dr. Williams succeeds, he produces a poem like "Burning the Christmas Greens" or "To Ford Madox Ford in Heaven," where the form and movement of the poem are close to the form and movement of the mind itself. This kind of poem, at its best, is very powerful; its effect is not so dissimilar as you might expect to the effect of the poem which successfully exemplifies the assimilated convention. And since at least the audience's share in the assimilation of conventional forms is very ill performed just now, this is perhaps as good a kind of thing as a poem can be today. Precisely because it is not established as a form, however, but has to grow completely for every occasion, this kind of order cannot be expected to emerge regularly, and Dr. Williams' poems often fail to take shape. The result, as a whole, is not unlike the result Wordsworth produced; some poems which

ive a kind of natural rightness of form to an understanding sharpened but uite unspecialized; others marred either by triviality, or a failure of form to merge for the occasion, or both, as in the cases of "The "Controversy" or These Purists."

Miss Moore's verse is as good as ever, and that is very good indeed. Her noral awareness, with its special sensitivity to fortitude and tranquility, is still lelicate and strong enough to fill every crevice of her minutely detailed accounts of nature. For her the elephant's

> straight trunks seem to say: when
> what we hoped for came to nothing, we revived.
> As loss could not ever alter Socrates'
> tranquillity, the elephant contrived
> equanimity;

and

> What sap
> went through that little thread
> to make the cherry red!

So eager has Macmillan been to remind us of these things that they have hastened to reprint Miss Moore's six most recent poems in a volume offered for the inconsiderable sum of $1.25.

Miss Young is, compared to Dr. Williams and Miss Moore, a newcomer. She obviously has talent. She knows how to use the devices of rhetoric:

> I fear, I fear the rarity
> Of nighthawk, swift, ruby throat; I fear extinct
> The roseate spoonbill and snowy egret slain
> By no known enemy;

she has a supply of ingenious and attractive details at her command, such as the birds of the previous quatrain; and she knows how to arrange such exotic material with abstract ideas. Yet to a considerable extent these gifts are exercised by her for their own sakes, with the result that many of her poems seem to be occasions for the production of effects, frequently irrelevant or so tenuously connected with each other or the central idea as to be nearly irrelevant, and with a tendency to repeat themselves, as if Miss Young had a select stock of them on hand ready to be fitted, with a few minor alterations, to any idea that comes along. Most of these effects are borrowed, from Miss Moore, Wallace Stevens, Auden, the 1890's, even Shakespeare ("As lilies festered in the gale"). No one could possibly, I should think, object to their being so if it were not that they so often appear to be borrowed simply as effects without much regard for any purpose they were originally intended or might now be made to serve. The impression this fundamental eclecticism creates is not decreased by the fact that Miss Young has, along with so much other twentieth-century poetry, chosen to ignore syntax and to depend on the implied tone of voice as a substitute. Where did this habit of getting a striking effect by disregarding one of the most valuable of the formal resources of language get

its start? Almost behind our backs it seems to have become an establishe and popular vice; among the poets under consideration here, only Miss Moor and Auden are not its victims, and I suspect that suggests a higher proportio of unmaimed than actually obtains among poets in general.

The fascination of a certain order of thoughts having to do mainly wit the relation of idea to actuality for Miss Young appears to be of much the sam kind as the fascination of these stylistic effects. She shows considerable in genuity in working out some of the paradoxical and startling aspects of thi order, and yet it is rather the fascination than the significance which seems t concern her; her attitude toward these ideas is aesthetic, with the sometime likable but never quite serious excitement about ideas of her namesakes. In fac the real sincerity of Miss Young appears to be, at present, the precocious an pleasantly energetic aesthetic hedonism suggested by her vocabulary. Th frequently repeated words and phrases in her verse are: *clouds, angels, harp butterflies, moths-and-candles, purple, golden, lilies, rose petals, spheres, twinkl infinity, crucial, specious, yea,* verbs in *-eth,* and the names of exotic birds.

Miss Young seems to me, as I began by saying, to have an attractive talen But as the result of a kind of conspiracy of all the habits of rhetorical an semantic self-indulgence of twentieth-century poetry, it is exercising itself in kind of activity that runs a real chance of passing itself off on Miss Young, an perhaps on others, as philosophical verse.

The verse of Mr. Lowell, another newcomer, is of a very different orde from Miss Young's, for both the attitude he has to express and the style h finds for it are deadly serious affairs. Neither is as yet, in this first boo matured, but both are sufficiently developed to be extremely interesting. M Lowell is trying to experience and express what he knows and feels directl without either the self-qualification of protective irony or the liberalism of th apologetic joke, without, as Auden's Prospero says of suffering, "saying som thing ironic or funny / On suffering." The danger in this is that hysteria ma be mistaken for directness, the accidental personal experience for the general valid. I think Mr. Lowell has not yet learned always to distinguish betwee these things (contrast, for example, "The Bomber" with his much more su cessful "On the Eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.")

Mr. Lowell's style is baroque, but what might be called the serious baroqu it is the kind of language natural to a poet for whom the world is in ever detail vividly symbolic and who is determined to maintain this saving convi tion against the pressure of custom, the habit of his time, for which the worl is only thinly symbolic or not symbolic at all; he does it partly by an effort the will. These are extremely difficult circumstances in which to make a succe of such a style, and when Mr. Lowell does not bring it off, the necessa complexities of the style tend to become merely intellectual and verbal an very occasionally, ludicrous. This is a passage, for example, from a poem c the Cross:

> Here are scales whose Reckoning-weight
> Outweighs the apple's fell dejection;

Our cornerstone, the Jew's Rejection.
O royalest bier of state,
Wealth from the waters you deliver,
All Argo overshot or Ark secured,
Most blessed Arc, your beams have cured
The Golden Fleece.

But when Mr. Lowell succeeds, what you hear is something like the voice of the prophetic poet, a voice which we have rarely heard since the seventeenth century, grand without grandiloquence and intimate without triviality or meanness:

Remember, seaman, Salem fishermen
Once hung their nimble fleets on the Grand Banks.
Where was it that New England bred the men
Who quartered the Leviathan's fat flanks
And fought the British lion to his knees?

It is customary, in writing about Auden, to discuss either the failure of his poems to convey any sense of final conviction about the attitudes to which they are most obviously committed or their dazzling and suspicious technical facility. This custom seems to me both unbalanced and ungrateful. Not that there is not some support for it, but that after the worst has been said Auden remains, if not the wisest, surely the most intelligent poet writing in English today and, if not above an occasional ad lib, the most honestly skilful. Under these circumstances I think we would do better to devote the bulk of our attention to elucidation rather than to grumbling about Auden's occasional shortcomings.

In the present book he is dealing with two closely connected problems, the problem of the relation of the artist's imagination to reality and the problem of reality's relation to actuality:

Art opens the fishiest eye
To the Flesh and the Devil who heat
The Chamber of Temptation
Where heroes roar and die.
We are wet with sympathy now;
Thanks for the evening; but how
Shall we satisfy when we meet,
Between Shall-I and I-Will,
The lion's mouth whose hunger
No metaphors can fill?

In "The Sea and the Mirror" the emphasis is on the former problem and in "For the Time Being" on the latter. Neither poem is a closely integrated whole; the first is called "a commentary" and the second an "oratorio." Each is a loosely connected series of lyrics having to do with a subject suggested to Auden more by an anterior interest of his own than by either *The Tempest* or Christmas.

There are two passages in the notes to the "New-Year Letter" which are of considerable importance here, especially for an understanding of "The Sea and

the Mirror." The first is a quotation from Kierkegaard's *Journals* on pp. 84-5 and the second a note of Auden's own on p. 129. Here are a few sentences from each.

> "In order really to be a great genius, a man must be an exception . . . There is a definite point in which he suffers; it is impossible for him to run with the herd. Perhaps his dementia has nothing whatsoever to do with his real genius, but it is the pain by which he is nailed out in isolation—and he must be isolated if he is to be great; and no man can freely isolate himself; he must be compelled if it is to be a serious matter."

> Any idea has two practical purposes, to justify our satisfaction, and to suggest a way to relieve our wants. As justification, an idea is a pure reflection of our material life and cannot re-enter history as an effective agent because it does not want to.

In "The Sea and the Mirror" Prospero is presented as the great poet who is giving up his magic because it is self-justifying and enchanting:

> When I woke into my life, a sobbing dwarf
> Whom giants served only as they pleased, I was not what I seemed;
> Beyond their busy backs I made a magic
> To ride away from a father's imperfect justice,
> Take vengeance on the Romans for their grammar, . . .
> Now, Ariel, I am that I am, your late and lonely master,
> Who knows now what magic is;—the power to enchant
> That comes from disillusion.

Caliban is the poet's quotidian self, the person who, when the audience at the end of the play cries for the author, steps from the wings to address them. His voice is the voice of the James prefaces to the New York Edition:

> If now, having dismissed your hired impersonators with verdicts ranging from the laudatory orchid to the disgusted and disgusting egg, you ask and, of course, notwithstanding the conscious fact of his irrevocable absence, you instinctively *do* ask for our so good, so great, so dead author . . .

Like the James of the prefaces, he speaks to the audience about poetry, the poet as poet, and the poet as man; as in the case of James, it is the elaborate convention of speech that allows Auden to say so much as he does. It is typical of the ingenious muddlement which results from Auden's free handling of Shakespeare's play that he should manage to make Caliban speak for both poet and audience, Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban for poet and man, and then, to top it all off, to have Caliban deliver "a message from our late author." Your feeling that at any given moment you do not certainly know how many worlds of discourse you are in is equalled only by your conviction that Auden does.

Most of the other important characters of Shakespeare's play are presented as people who have been "soundly hunted / By their own devils into their human selves." All, except Antonio, have been awakened from their self-admiring dreams.

> But we have only to sit still and give no orders
> To make you offer us your echo and your mirror;

> We have only to believe you, then you dare not lie;
> To ask for nothing, and at once from your calm eyes,
> With their lucid proof of apprehension and disorder,
> All we are not stares back at what we are,

as Prospero says to Ariel. The wonderful variety of ideas and techniques with which these personages are presented has to be seen at first hand to be appreciated.

It might be said, from the dramatic point of view, that Auden's characters are, like Congreve's, too uniformly witty, the would-be wits speaking with a brilliance hardly less than that of the wits. On the whole, however, this is not a very serious consideration as long as the reader does not mistake Auden's poem for a dramatically unified whole and remembers that he is "presenting" rather than "representing" these characters. It might also be said that occasionally the operation of his figures, as Coleridge said of Cowley's, "consists in the excitement of surprise by the juxtaposition and *apparent* reconciliation of widely different or incompatible things . . . and is therefore a species of *wit,* a pure work of the *will.*" But this is comparatively rare considering how many widely different things Auden has undertaken to reconcile here.

The most serious limitation on the ideas of the poem seems to me the insistence with which Auden still clings to the genetic fallacy. It is not so much that from the point of view of the writer the whole psychological explanation he offers for the poet's activity may not be true, as that his preoccupation with it tends to make him take too lightly the product of the poet's activity, not, perhaps, excluding his own. The genesis of a poem is far from being the measure of its value, or even the most entertaining thing about it. The account of Shakespeare's career in the song on page ten, for example, is, for all its cleverness, trivial to the point of irrelevance. The idea even looms discomfortingly in Ariel's beautiful song to Caliban.

The lyrics in "For the Time Being" are held together by an almost uniformly brilliant narrator. Auden is really developing here, in terms of the story of Christ's birth, an idea which has been in his poetry from the start:

> I mean
> That the world of space where events reoccur is still there,
> Only now it's no longer real; the real one is nowhere
> Where time never moves and nothing can ever happen.

This idea is clearly developed in XVII of *Poems,* which goes back at least as far as the Faber *Poems* of 1930; and it has recurred regularly ever since. This is our true existence, but

> Since Adam, being free to choose,
> Chose to imagine he was free
> To choose his own necessity,
> Lost in his freedom, Man pursues
> The shadow of his images

(compare the fifth sonnet in "The Quest"). To the frustration, the deception,

and the despair of living altogether in the world of space and the difficulty of living in the real one Auden directs the attention of his speakers. The attitudes toward this subject which he invents for them are always beautifully realized. The opening chorus, for example, sets forth the despair of the world before the birth of Christ in a marvelous variation on the stanza form of Momus' famous song in the *Secular Masque*. Joseph is given a combination of folk ballad, popular song, and pure Auden in which to express a dilemma no less truly tragic for being popularly and rightly thought comic:

> The bar was gay, the lighting well-designed,
> And I was sitting down to wait
> My own true Love:
> A voice I'd heard before, I think,
> Cried: "This is on the House. I drink
> To him
> Who does not know it is too late";
> When I asked for the time
> Everyone was very kind.
>
> CHORUS (off)
> Mary may be pure,
> But, Joseph, are you sure?
> How is one to tell?
> Suppose, for instance . . . Well . . .

The shepherds are Auden's poor with their "sufferings to which they are fairly accustomed"; and Herod is the liberal trying to establish the Rational Life:

> Things are beginning to take shape. It is a long time since anyone stole the park benches or murdered the swans. There are children in this province who have never seen a louse, shopkeepers who have never handled counterfeit coin, women of forty who have never hidden in a ditch except for fun. Yes, in twenty years I have managed to do a little.

Now he is confronted by the irrational:

> Naturally this cannot be allowed to happen. Civilization must be saved even if this means sending for the military, as I suppose it does. How dreary . . . O dear, why couldn't this wretched infant be born somewhere else? Why can't people be sensible? I don't want to be horrid.

I do not suppose Auden will ever be an epic or dramatic or perfect poet. He has very little gift for characterization and is much more uniformly successful in providing "a distinct gratification from each component *part*" than in producing "such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with" this gratification. But if his powers are not unlimited, if his conception of his subject is occasionally more clever than just, if he is, in Coleridge's sense, sometimes merely witty, this seems to me a small price to pay for the general intelligence and seriousness of his verse and the almost incredible ease with which he handles a great variety of styles and forms.

F. O. MATTHIESSEN:

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER: *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories.* Harcourt, Brace.

Miss Porter's high reputation among nearly all schools of critics may now have reached the point where it is doing her a disservice. She is bracketed as "a writer's writer," which she certainly is, so far as that phrase implies that almost any other craftsman can learn important things from her about the handling of both language and structure. But the common reader has too frequently been led to believe that "style" is something esoteric, something to be relished apart from what it conveys, and that Miss Porter's relatively slim production must mean that she has not much to say. This misconception has also been nourished unwittingly by her admirers who like her quality so much that they want more and keep urging her to write a novel. But Miss Porter herself, when introducing the work of Eudora Welty, saw that for the master of the short story the novel may simply be the next trap ahead. The assumed superiority of the longer form is a product of our American supposition that bigger must be better, and has blown up many a lyric poet into an abortive epic bard, as well as the content adequate for a decent novel into a limp trilogy.

What we tend to forget is that in such a characteristically French form as the novelette, in the story of twenty to forty thousand words, we have also an American tradition. The kind of intensification that Melville gained in *Benito Cereno* and *Billy Budd,* and that James, working so differently, accomplished in *Pandora, The Coxon Fund, The Bench of Desolation* and a dozen others, would seem to have much to offer to our period whose syntheses are often so precarious that they may be lost through extension. Miss Porter has set her special signature on this form, as Hemingway has on the contemporary practice of the short story. Not that she hasn't worked brilliantly in short stories as well, but sometimes hers can seem too fragmentary, as, for instance, do the first half dozen pieces in this new volume in comparison with the more integrated structure of *Old Mortality,* which dealt with the same descendants of Kentucky against a Louisiana and Texas background.

Yet these very stories can demonstrate the searching originality of her content. She may seem to be dealing with the stock material of the local colorists, with older Southern manners and customs as they persisted down into this century. Yet you quickly realize, in "The Old Order" and "The Last Leaf," that the human relationships are being examined with a new depth and honesty, that the sentimental view of the devoted old slave living on serenely with her former mistress is punctured once for all by such a quiet observation as that Nannie thrived on "a species of kindness not so indulgent, maybe, as that given to the puppies."

Such discoveries of the living intricacy in any relationship are Miss Porter's most recurrent resource. A passage at the end of "The Grave," the last of this

group, gives a very explicit clue as to how she comes into possession of her material. This passage records how Miranda, by a chance of seemingly irrelevant association, is suddenly struck with the full violence of an episode long buried in her childhood, by her first knowledge of the mystery of birth as it had come to her through seeing a pregnant rabbit that her brother had shot and was skinning. This passage, too long to quote here, reveals Miss Porter's understanding of how much enters into any mature experience, of how deeply bathed in imaginative richness any event must be if it is to become a fluid and viable symbol.

The frequence with which violence lies at the heart of her discoveries helps to explain a main source of strength in her delicate prose. "The Circus," the best short story here, conveys the naked agony with which Miranda, too young to grasp the conventions, reacts to the dangers and brutalities of the show. What the others can take in the comic spirit presses upon her a first initiation into the pity and terror of life. Violence in modern fiction has been so often a substitute for understanding that Miss Porter's ability to use it to reveal ethical values is another of her particular distinctions, as she showed especially in *Noon Wine.* In "The Downward Path to Wisdom," one of the three longer stories in this collection, her control seems far less sure, since the brutalities which are poured down upon the helpless child by his elders are not sufficiently motivated to make a coherent pattern. Violence seems to have been manipulated almost for its own sake.

Still another of Miss Porter's distinctions has been her refutation of the local colorists and other narrow regionalists by her extraordinary ability to portray a whole series of different environments. It may only be our anticipation of so much variety from her that causes a story like "A Day's Work" to seem for the first time a repetition of material handled more freshly in "The Cracked Looking-Glass." In comparison with that earlier story, which was a sustained miracle of Irish feeling and rhythm, both the situation and characters here may seem slightly expected. But when we turn to the longest story, to the novelette which gives title to the volume, we have again the rare combination of virtuosity with moral penetration.

Here Miss Porter uses a controlling symbol in the way that James often did, since the leaning tower not only is a souvenir of the Berlin landlady's long past happiness in Italy, but also becomes a compelling image for the tottering balance of the German world in the year before Hitler's rise to power. Many best-selling accounts have now been written of that time, and yet it seems doubtful whether any of them will preserve its form and pressure longer than Miss Porter's presentation of it through the consciousness of a young American painter. The reason for her success may be suggested by a comment James once made when noting that Turgenieff's *Memoirs of a Sportsman,* dealing with the question of serfdom, had appeared in the very same year as *Uncle Tom's Cabin:* "No single episode pleads conclusively against the 'pecular institution' of Russia; the lesson is the cumulative testimony of a multiude of fine touches—in an after-sense of sadness that sets wise readers thinking . . . It

offers a capital example of moral meaning giving a sense to form and form giving relief to moral meaning."

Some of Miss Porter's "fine touches" consist in her recurrent stress on the city's poverty, through Charles Upton's gradual realization of the difference from the depression he had left behind at home, where everybody took it for granted that things would improve, whereas in Berlin "the sufferers seemed to know that they had no cause for hope." No journalist or social historian analyzing the collapse of the republic has come closer to the central cause. And concerning the interpenetration of form and moral meaning, a comparison with Christopher Isherwood's *Good-Bye to Berlin* is instructive. Isherwood looked back to the same kind of student and boarding house life, and he dealt more explicitly with some of the manifestations of social decay. But his characters seem self-consciously worked up from a Freudian hand-book, or they exist to shock like the figures in a cinema thriller. They have none of the deep authenticity that springs from Miss Porter's humility and tenderness before life. She has been able to apprehend many kinds of Germans, ranging from the lumpish solemn mathematician who "loves study and quiet" to the young aristocrat whose new cheek-wound brings out in his expression a mixture of "amazing arrogance, pleasure, inexpressible vanity and self-satisfaction." Miss Porter does not slight the bestial brutalities in this hard city. No more, however, does she indulge in easy propaganda. When Charles Upton remarks lightly that Americans are sentimental and "like just everybody," the young mathematician stares at him earnestly and says: "I do not think you really like anybody, you Americans. You are indifferent to everybody and so it is easy for you to be gay, to be careless, to seem friendly. You are really cold-hearted indifferent people."

As a result of weaving back and forth through contradictions and incongruities, from one flickering center of human conviction to another, Miss Porter has done again what she did in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. She has created the atmosphere of a haunting moment of crisis. In that earlier novelette she gave us the end of the last war as it was felt in America through the crazy fever of the flu epidemic. Here, as she brings her group of students close together for a moment of New Year's Eve conviviality, what reverberates through their every speech and gesture is a premonition of disaster. In writing of Miss Welty, Miss Porter warned the artist against political beliefs, but here we can see that her remark was not the reactionary one that such a remark generally is. For she has penetrated into the economic and social sicknesses that brought on Fascism, but she has also held to her knowledge that the realm of the creator of fiction must be broader and more resilient than theories or opinions, that it can be nothing less than "that true and human world of which the artist is a living part."

BREWSTER GHISELIN:

O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories of 1944, edited by Herschel Brickell. Doubleday, Doran.

The Best American Short Stories of 1944, edited by Martha Foley. Houghton Mifflin.

A high proportion of the forty-seven stories collected in the two leading annuals are designed primarily to demonstrate a point, to support an idea, to recommend an attitude or action. Perhaps the writers have been impressed by the wartime talk about our need of solid certainties and forthright thinking. Many seem to have been convinced that it is time to show that after all they are "responsibles." Typical of work which appears in both volumes is Mark Schorer's "Blockbuster," reprinted from *Mademoiselle* in the O. Henry collection. Its meager narrative enforces the idea that the sins of the children are primarily the sins of the parents. Miss Foley has reprinted from the *New Yorker* a similar contrivance, "More Like a Coffin," by Hazel Hawthorne, which is more living in some of the details but as narrowly insistent upon its central and single idea.

Another similar pair from the two volumes demonstrates the indissolubility of private joy and public anguish. But because these stories, Morton Fineman's "Soldier of the Republic" (from *Harper's Bazaar*) and Irwin Shaw's "The Veterans Reflect" *(Accent)*, are far richer in texture they seem less incomplete. They do more than assert; to some extent they illuminate. Such stories no doubt have practical and positive value in our time, for they deal significantly with the anguish of mankind deprived by the disorder of the world today. But they are more nearly constructions of craft than works of art.

Even so richly illuminating a story as Josephine W. Johnson's "The Rented Room," which Miss Foley reprints from *Harper's Bazaar,* is a little overinsistent. In this story all the ordinary loved things of a woman's life, together with their contradiction, are assembled in a single perspective through which the main character moves as down a long street arranged by some domestic Chirico. The effect is powerful, but too limited. The emphasis of love upon its objects is hot and blind. The revulsions are absolute. It seems right that the character who suffers should have no doubts or reservations. But it is wrong that the reader should be enclosed in the limitations of the character, as if that world were final. A closed world is always a little stuffy. This one is also overwarm. It needs the cooling effect of irony.

It is probably the irony of a comparable story, Shaw's first-prize story "Walking Wounded" (the *New Yorker*), which accounts for its superiority to "The Rented Room." Some of the force of that irony may be illustrated by the passage in which the soldier in Africa, yearning for his wife at home and disgusted with the woman who is not a substitute, leaves her in a night club: "Outside, with the music thin and distant in his ears, he stood for a few moments and looked at the Pyramids, which loomed, crumbling in the darkness, in memory of the unremembered dead."

It is irony which establishes the superiority of J. F. Powers' "Lions, Harts, Leaping Does," first printed in *Accent* and one of the four stories appearing in both anthologies. Some other stories in both volumes have the richness and complexity of detail, the fullness of body, that distinguishes this one, most notably "The Good Days and the Bad" by Helen Eustis, reprinted from *Story* by Miss Foley. Few can compare with it in completeness. In the conclusion of Mr. Powers' story, a canary that has flown out into the snowy night is made the symbolic image of the dying priest Didymus, a skeptic, who grieves because his mind is possessed by the things of sense, in dying as in life. "How long would it be, Didymus wondered faintly, before Titus ungrievingly gave the canary up for lost in the snowy arms of God?" To the tension of multiple meaning that so excites and liberates the mind at this focal point of the story, irony contributes largely. The image is full of contradiction: of reconciliation and division, of loss and attainment, of bitter joy and icy love, of doubt that is not absolute.

The mind securely possessing itself and its object will not fail to represent the complexity, contradiction, ambiguity of life. For such a mind can afford the instability of a living insight and it will not be satisfied with anything short of completeness. By completeness I do not mean elaborateness such as that of Lionel Trilling's story from *Partisan Review,* "Of This Time, Of That

Place," which depicts a man's self-betrayal in such great detail that the exposure is protracted into tedium. I mean a justice done to the whole complex of our world, not only the objective scene of place and person but the psychic activity involved in every aspect of the scene, the complex of living gestures which are the active part of perception. For the world envisaged is not only something beheld, a thing or process separate from the perceiving life. It is an act of the beholder. When the writer's presentation of his world evokes the activities which the living recognize as the gestures of their life, even though they may never have made those gestures before, then simply to move in that world is for them to realize their life.

Few contemporary stories have that kind of adequacy. Of the stories in the two anthologies, the one that to my mind has most is Vladimir Nabokov's " 'That in Aleppo Once . . .'," reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly* in *The Best American Short Stories*. The story is a representation of life dislocated and dispersed amid the shocks of war, an experience of suspense, conflict, yearning, crowded with impressions and uncertain of meaning. I believe it is a true image of our world, not simply the world created by war, but the world which produced the disorders out of which war came and which is likely to continue producing them for awhile. It seems to me important to move in that world, the only real world for us, and live out its problems. Writers, and readers, who turn from it to other, happier pictures or who content themselves with stories which merely exhibit some matter or demonstrate some point, however significant or timely, are conniving in the emasculation of art and denying their deeper needs as men. They are the real irresponsibles.

FRANCIS C. GOLFFING:

New Poems 1944, edited by Oscar Williams. Howell, Soskin.
New Directions VIII, edited by James Laughlin. New Directions.

The two yearbooks under discussion have one thing in common: they are both selective rather than representative. In every other respect they are dissimilar, including the governing principles of their selectiveness.

Oscar Williams' anthology is divided into two sections, one containing poems written by civilians, the other poems written by men in the armed forces. This division implies that civilians and soldiers are dealing with two separate or at best overlapping ranges of experiences, and in his preface the editor explicity states his conviction that "civilians not immediately involved or endangered, no matter how imaginatively sensitive they may be, do not have the same complex of experience that those actively engaged in the war possess." He goes on to qualify his statement by hinting at possible errors of judgment, but this refers to his selection and leads away from the main problem: whether the present crisis really offers two different aspects to soldiers and civilians, and whether these aspects are sufficiently disparate to warrant two independent sections of an anthology.

By answering both questions in the affirmative, Mr. Williams seems to confound a general broadening of experience with a qualitative *differentia* of perception. What really counts is not whether the soldier poet will meet new problems but, first, whether these problems will provide him with a new subject matter and, second, whether they are likely to modify his understanding. I have my doubts as to both. The English or American soldier cannot hope for a qualitative increase of experience through active participation, except perhaps in two ways. I am thinking of certain combat experiences and of the peculiar *brand* of ennui attendant on garrison life. Both are of limited significance either as poetic subject matter or as modifiers of perception. To extract meaning from sheer violence is impossible; the best a poet can achieve in this field is to render the impact of brute force upon his sensibility, with the associated emotions of shame and waste. If he survives, his sensibility too will survive, but outraged, not enriched. The boredom of camp life may be treated in the spirit of revolt, of self-pity, or of irony; yet none of these modes is likely to result in great poetry, because of the vagueness and poverty of the theme.

It appears to me that so far the most moving war poetry has been written by civilian poets (Stevens, Auden, Marianne Moore), and that Miss Moore's definition of war as a projection of our own divided self is about the best definition available. Nor do Stevens' "Repetitions of a Young Captain" ring less authentic for being composed by an elderly non-combatant. Conversely, some

of the ablest verse written by poets in the service is wholly unconnected with the war. Mr. Williams, in the "soldier" part of his anthology, somewhat obscures this state of affairs by confining his selections almost exclusively to pieces written on military themes. But even a writer as interested in the plight of the intelligent soldier as Karl Shapiro reaches his highest level in a few poems dealing with universally human themes. (This is said with all due respect to Shapiro's "Elegy for a Dead Soldier," printed in this volume.) It may be that their very closeness to the most revolting aspects of warfare and regimentation—aspects that are scarcely amenable to poetic treatment—disqualifies many gifted soldier poets for the writing of good war poetry.

I have dwelt on this point at some length because it is a real problem in the criticism of contemporary poetry. Yet, while objecting to Mr. Williams' factitious dividing line, I have a very high regard for his actual achievement. His choice is, on the whole, excellent and shows the editor once more as an unusually keen critic, despite the most self-depreciation of his preface. Since his specimens are largely reprints from magazines, the reader should not look for startling discoveries; but he will find a sizeable number of young talents who have hitherto been known only to a few. As would be expected, certain recognized masters stand out above the rest: Stevens, Marianne Moore, Auden (whose "Alonzo to Ferdinand" is one of the few perfect poems of our age, interesting also as an experiment in syllabic meter), Tate and Blackmur. Some of the omissions are deplorable and, in default of an explanation, puzzling (*e.g.*, W. C. Williams, Stanley Kunitz and Robert Fitzgerald). In the soldier section Dunstan Thompson and Shapiro are easily the best, with F. T. Prince and Richard Eberhart taking the third and fourth places.

After reading this anthology I am left with the impression that the British experimental poets of ten years ago have reverted to more traditional forms (cf. the pieces by Auden and Spender, and the remarkable sonnet sequence by C. Day Lewis) while the younger British and most Americans continue their diverse and often very stimulating experiments. Among the American traditionalists, Allen Tate and John Peale Bishop are the finest craftsmen; the former is represented by his highly-wrought "Seasons of the Soul," republished from *Kenyon Review*. Bishop—whose recent death is a great loss to American letters—is less sustained in his performance but always worth reading for his very personal elegance and dignity of phrase. At the opposite pole, I would single out the two sonnets of E. E. Cummings as distinctly superior work. But perhaps the most *realized* pieces in the whole book are the three poems by Blackmur, written to commemorate the death of a friend.

New Directions VIII continues a laudable tradition with a measure of success. As usual, Mr. Laughlin's bill of fare is arranged to satisfy the adventurous taste rather than the fastidious. This is not said to slight an unusually bold and capable publisher, but I consider his yearbooks the least satisfactory of his editorial ventures. The difficulty is inherent in the nature of his project: to choose experimental writing for its value as experiment rather than for its value as literature. His strong accent on the provisional, "laboratory" product results in the inclusion of quite a number of pieces that are bizarre and ingenious, but of small creative significance. Besides, few of his contributors strike out on wholly new paths. The exceptions, in the present volume, are Kenneth Rexroth, Chauncey Hackett and A. M. Klein. In "The Phoenix and the Turtle" Rexroth shows considerable skill in sustaining and modulating the sense pattern of his narrative, shifting easily from the symbolic to the descriptive key, and thence to the almost abstract historic summary. As his metrical basis he uses the unrhymed triple beat line, which allows many variations and is preferable to completely "free" verse in longer compositions. A. M. Klein, the Canadian poet, manages to combine in some of his poems the verbal pyrotechnics of *Finnegans Wake* with a very funny mixture of Yiddish and Chaucerian English; the result, though plainly a *tour de force,* is impressive. Hackett's story, "Ablative Absolute," is surrealistic in theme and mood, yet carefully, almost contrapuntally, constructed. This blend of dream atmosphere and architectonic design—akin to Chirico's art—is something new in surrealist literature. It may indicate a trend away from semi-automatic writing and uncontrolled phantasy toward a more consecutive rendering of subconscious states.

Some of the other contributions are good in their way, though not strikingly novel—*e. g.*, the poems by Weldon Kees, closely modeled on Empson. June Cannan belongs in the same category. W. C. Williams' poem, "To All Gentleness," treats a difficult theme—the Heraclitean "coincidence of opposites"—powerfully and originally. Williams has modified and elaborated his structural

innovations over a period of several decades and may be said to stand for American experimentalism at its best.

Among the plays, J. M. Brinnin's parable for dancers, "The Fiery Exile," is the most interesting. Mr. Brinnin is indebted to Wallace Stevens as regards both diction (cf. "The simpler connoisseurs may be undone / With stasis and routine") and imaginative range; yet his verse is very fine in parts and even his occasional mannerisms are redeemed by a remarkable gift for phrasing. The South American and Afro-Cuban sections suffer from the lack of originals, but Edwin Honig's renderings of Lorca are a major triumph of translation. They alone would make the book well worth having.

W. McNEIL LOWRY:

ALDOUS HUXLEY: *Time Must Have a Stop.* Harpers.
JEAN STAFFORD: *Boston Adventure.* Harcourt, Brace.

Time Must Have a Stop is the second novel to follow *Eyeless in Gaza.* That book denoted a radical change in Huxley's sympathies, a change which promised a kindred transmutation of his fictional materials. The promise has not proved to be fruitful. Today a philosophical mystic, Huxley the novelist is still bringing the same wares to market. Those who have always read him for his wit and his malice will have a better time of his latest novel than the mystic attempting "to pay attention to the Nature of Things."

Sebastian Barnack, the hero of the new novel, is a talented young aesthete cut from the exact cloth of Denis in *Crome Yellow.* He is spared none of the meticulous dissection meted out to his prototype; his pretensions are as mercilessly satirized as if Huxley himself had just escaped from them, as he *had* just escaped from Denis's in 1921. Sebastian, like Denis again, is surrounded by other pretensions embodied in characters familiar to all Huxley novels—the aging sensualist; the woman who makes herself ludicrous trying to do things for the "good" of others; the bungling politician, Sebastian's father; and a young scientist who must sacrifice his reasoned "emancipation" for marriage in order to get the woman he wants. (She, herself, curiously or significantly, depending upon one's view of Huxley's present course, is not subjected to the scalpel thrust, even though her whole existence is spent upon the search for luxury and the deliberate and clinical relief of her passions.)

Why is it that in three novels devoted in part to the exposition of non-attachment, Aldous Huxley has not been able to portray a convincing mystic? Mr. Miller and Mr. Propter were mere recordings of a voice, as is Bruno Rontini of *Time Must Have a Stop.* Anthony Beavis, the first hero to become a mystic, was perhaps the most real of the lot, but we remember him largely as Huxley painted him in his unregenerate, pre-conversion days. Sebastian Barnack is a mystic only in the epilogue of Huxley's new novel, and here he reproduces, with only the fewest changes in terminology, the pronouncements of Miller and Propter in the earlier books. The tenor of these passages leaves the reader with only the vaguest notion as to how the Sebastian Barnack of the first 275 pages could suffer metamorphosis into a man in touch with "the unmanifested principle of all manifestation."

The history of literature gives us abundant proof of the difficulty of making saints credible in fiction. But Huxley's failure to synthesize his private view of reality since 1936 with the subject matter of his novels is symptomatic of a more immediate and personal failure—whether of art or of philosophy only time will tell. The materials of *Time Must Have a Stop,* to take only the most recent example, are far too disparate and inharmonious. A crude view of the fictional art might propose that five or six futile and infantile people mixed with one "good man" (in this case, the mystic) would make the latter's excellence shine out in even more rarity and splendor. But the seventeen-year-old Sebastian, his bitter father, the diabolic young woman who seduces Sebastian, and burnt out Uncle Eustace, dedicating his life to Art and Sloth, are far too straw-filled as opponents for the gospel according to Aldous Huxley. There is no folly, pretension, or vice exhibited by them which Huxley did not attack more effectively in *Antic Hay,* to say nothing of *Point Counter Point;* in short, long before his turning from a—loosely—humanistic view of

life to a mystical one. If a protagonist for the world, the flesh, and the devil is needed, why not a Rampion or a Quarles, who themselves were a match for aesthetic and idealistic "perverts," to revert to an earlier Huxley terminology?

The answer, I think, is that Huxley's mysticism has not thoroughly permeated his imagination. Certainly there is little compassion in it. He is fascinated and revolted by the things he has always been fascinated or revolted by. And the attempt to force his exposition of mystical communion into a world peopled by the standard Huxley reprobates leads him into the most fantastic lapses of taste, as when the view of "an eternity of radiant knowledge" is given to the departed spirit not of Bruno Rontini, the mystic, but of Uncle Eustace Barnack, the decayed sensualist, whose activities in the void include also the more traditional, if less commendable, practice of table-tipping.

Huxley himself has remarked that his literary talents are those of an essayist; the expository passages in his present novel often possess much of the incisiveness of *Do What You Will* and *Beyond the Mexique Bay*. But his journey into the world of the spirit has been at the expense of whatever command over the novel of ideas he possessed in *Point Counter Point*. His last two novels divide sadly upon two utterly divorced planes. Since in *Time Must Have a Stop* the hero on one plane is sublimated to the other, we have not even the satisfaction of paying our money and taking our choice. Huxley, it would seem, has long since shared our dilemma.

Boston Adventure is an excellent novel, and also that rare thing—a first novel which is recognizably derivative and yet possesses the integrity of a single imagination encompassing experience.

It grows from the age, exhibits the "between-wars" novelist's interest in the fluidity of time, the technique of "breadthwise cutting," associative psychology, Dostoevsky, Proust. Yet it does not consciously mirror the age: although much of the plot is occupied with the thirties and there are topical references such as to Hitler and Roosevelt, the period is only vaguely established for the reader.

This sense of timelessness is not due to overconcern with place, even if the very concentration upon the manners and customs of Boston lends an effect of timelessness to the people described—just as in reading Proust we can easily forget that the last of the Guermantes women belonged to the cocktail era. It proceeds, rather, from Miss Stafford's Proustian method of developing her materials, which are "mental" to a surprising degree—everything that happens happens both to and through the mind of Sonia Marburg. It is not purely the technique of "Combrai," however. What passes through Sonia's mind is not only psychological—or spiritual—but also physical, active, anecdotal even to the broad strokes used by writers of English fiction in the eighteenth century.

Much more is meant than that she is both the "I" of the novel and the "I" of the author. Everything in the narrative—even the incidents which Sonia merely hears retold—is distorted, diffused, or filtered by her mind. She is the perceived and the perceptor, the protagonist and the agent acted upon. If the ultimate result is irony, it is an irony which is indiscriminate, too easily ignored to constitute a "point of view." Nor does Miss Stafford succeed in making Sonia more than barely credible as a person, however useful as the matrix of vividly realized characters and scenes suggestive of brilliance (some as memorable as any characters or scenes in Dostoevsky and Proust).

It is, then, a technique the virtues of which are also its limitations. As Proust knew, the "I" which is the perpetually discovering and rediscovering mind in which the materials of the novel take form is not the best subject for active drama. We remember Proust, Swann, and Charlus; the first felt, perceived, and recalled, whereas the last two did and were done to. *Boston Adventure* does not seriously suffer from lacking this distribution of roles because its scope is narrow. But it is difficult to foresee the technique employed against a wider background or to produce a more definite "point of view."

Eagerness to read Miss Stafford's future work makes strictures on the technique of *Boston Adventure* excusable. Except where associative symbols are dragged into Sonia's ken in a manner a little too businesslike, Miss Stafford's artistic skill is exciting, cultivated, and admirably suited to her present purposes.